LANGUAGE, RACE AND SPACE: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SPEAKER OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH IN HIGHER EDUCATION SPACES

BY

DOMINIQUE M. CLAYTON

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Policy Studies
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2018

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Adrienne Dixson, Chair
Professor Anne Haas Dyson
Associate Professor Bernice Barnett
Professor Catherine Prendergast

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand how African American English-speaking students understand their language and writing practices and experiences with language in PWI spaces while also applying a framework, racial communicative competence. Racial communicative competence allows for the exploration of the complexity of Black language practices. Using ethnographic methods, I show how the participants of this study experience and understand the dialect of AAE. An essential part of this study is to develop an understanding of the participants' knowledge about their language repertoires and how these repertoires in turn are perceived in various spaces. Additionally, this work looks at the role that writing classes play in erasing the linguistic and cultural practices of AAE speakers. I argue that when the students understand how they are perceived racially, rhetorically and linguistically in these spaces they then construct and implement strategies that resist the mainstream narratives about language and writing, narratives that often exclude them. Students' relationships to AAE are complex due to the institutional racism that institutions reinforce and ultimately use as a method of gatekeeping.

Acknowledgements

I had the biggest heartbreaks and losses in grad school. Nearly ten years ago, I sat I sat in a linguistic anthropology class and was introduced the fascinating world of linguistics and the importance of socio-cultural context. For this, I am forever grateful to Dr. Jennifer Esperanza, who cheered and encouraged me to pursue my area of interest even if I didn't know how it would fit into my future. While, Dr. Lisa Anderson-Levy complicated my ideas about social identities specifically the social constructs of race and challenged to think past the surface. The programs McNair and SROP were instrumental in my development as a scholar, with the faculty and staff outreach, planted a seed for the pursuit and value of my knowledge. Dra. Aurora Chang was instrumental to this development and always had the highest and best expectations of her scholars.

In words that I cannot begin to express this dissertation is as much my mother's, sisters' and nieces and nephews as it is mine. Without them, I wouldn't be the woman that I am now. Though, my mom didn't get to see me complete this journey, every day I feel her presence and her push to follow my dreams. Even in death, she will always be my guardian angel, cheerleader and heart. I like to thank all the academic and emotional support that I have had the opportunity to receive here at UIUC. I would like to thank my peers and friends that have been with me through every milestone, especially Tiffany Octavia Harris. My dissertation committee has been nothing short of supportive of my research and has pushed me to develop scholarship in ways that I never thought I could. To Dr. Dixson, thank you for advice, wisdom and support. Dr. Dyson, you are my language person! Thank you for always allowing me to put language first. Dr. Prendergast, thank you for introducing me writing studies and centering Black and brown

scholars in the conversation. And to Dr. Barnett, you are one of my biggest cheerleaders and your kind and thoughtful words have helped throughout grad school. Thank you.

To my mama, Doris Smith

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

Before 1965, American colleges and universities were exclusive places populated mostly by white males from middle or upper-class families. Prevalent social norms and a limited federal role in higher education also served to keep higher education as an exclusive space before the 1960s. The *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) case not only influenced k-12 institutions, but also had an influence on higher education. This was the start of institutions (slowly) desegregating their campuses (Thelin, 2011). Though, it was not until the mid-to-late 1960s did a major turning point occur in higher education. Changes in federal policy, along with a shift in public attitudes and expectations, opened up higher education to populations that previously had limited access. In 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which outlawed discrimination based on race in schools, public places, and employment and mandated equal opportunities for women (Williamson, 1999). In addition, the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 was passed, which extended need-based financial assistance to the general population for the first time (Williamson, 1999). During the same period, the civil rights and Black power movements influenced higher education by challenging public laws and practices that excluded Black people and other minority groups from attending some colleges and universities (Rogers, 2009).

Legally, all colors and creeds had access to higher education. The real test was what would happen when students arrived on college campuses, which began the process of retention. The history of Black students in predominantly white institutions (PWI) has been filled with discrimination and racism, but it also consists of students resisting structural racism and advocating for a quality education (Williamson, 1999; Harper, Patton &Wooden, 2009; Gusa, 2010). Black student activism contributed to the changes that were enacted on various campuses all over the country by demanding institutions diversify higher education, which meant admitting

more Black students, hiring Black faculty, and staff, attributing more facilities such as dorms, libraries, and student centers in the name of student academic support (Harper, Patton &Wooden, 2009; Kynard, 2013; Thelin, 2011; Wilder, 2013). PWIs were not meant to include Black bodies so when these various social activist movements sprouted throughout the 20th century, Black students were re-imagining and expanding the boundaries that were set for them. Nevertheless, Black students who integrated into U.S. universities were constantly fighting for their intellectual, rhetorical and linguistic abilities to be recognized and valued.

PWIs are increasing diversity in a multitude of ways and one aspect of this diversity is language variation. College classrooms are full of students with complex and intersectional identities and knowledges, which shape their linguistic and writing practices (Kynard, 2013; Lu, 1992). While the diversity of PWIs has improved over time, access is not synonymous with equity. Have institutions of higher learning embraced the unique cultures, languages and experiences that students of color bring to their respective campuses? This answer is still in debate, but I would argue that institutions do not have pedagogies or policies that align with their increasingly diverse student populations.

Studies have documented the gaps in achievement and limited access to college spaces among Black Americans. Black undergraduate students average a difference of 0.30 to 0.50 grade points below their white counterparts (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012). Additionally, students of color often report perceptions of racial hostility, while white students perceive the same campus climate to be positive and inclusive (Morales, 2014). Hostile campus racial climates can also cause Black students to experience extreme psychological distress (Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009). Black students have reported to consistently feeling marginalized, anxious, and do not feel a sense of belonging in their campus community (Brower & Ketterhagen, 2004; Harper,

Patton & Wooden, 2009; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012). Furthermore, the continuation of institutional racism disrupts the academic opportunities of Black undergraduates and has an adverse effect on their ability to progress academically. The racism that Black students experience on campus was often perpetuated by negative stereotypes about Black undergraduates (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2009). Racial stereotypes have caused many faculty members to have low expectations of Black students and discourage them from pursuing certain careers and majors. Institutional racism has contributed to producing and further reinforcing stigmas and discriminatory practices. Therefore, institutional racism serves as a basis for the inequitable treatment of Black students. Black students' opportunities to be judged as competent and worthy students, to be supported, and to feel included within their campus community are repeatedly taken away (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2009).

As a graduate student, I held an assistantship that required me to interact with underrepresented undergraduate students, who were predominantly Black (Clayton, 2014). This particular space was specifically created in the 1960s to retain and, I would argue to some extent, manage underrepresented college students. PWI spaces often present navigational challenges for underrepresented students because of oppressive institutional policies and curricula that have been intentionally used to exclude students of color from being admitted and retained (Williamson, 1999; Thelin, 2011). This particular space on campus is one where students can express their academic concerns and obtain access to resources that can ease their transition into college. There were many acclimation issues that students expressed, but I was surprised that the topic of language and writing became a significant part of these conversations. Over time, I learned that my students had varying levels of issues surrounding language and writing within the campus space, specifically in writing classrooms.

One afternoon, I was meeting with Patrice, a student who is a speaker of African

American English (AAE), and we were discussing her progress in her freshman composition class. Patrice told me that she had received a D on her assignment (Clayton, 2014). When I asked why, Patrice said that it was because she used the word "ain't" in her paper and she asked me is "ain't" a word? I told her that "ain't" was a word. Then I explained that in some spaces, especially in academic spaces, "ain't" is not always seen as the "right" word. And she responded, "then how do I know what's right?" (Clayton, 2014, p.1). This was not the first time that one of my students expressed frustration because of the linguistic and writing restraints placed on them in their college classes. Coincidentally, a few weeks later I was chastised for using "ain't" where I worked, the very same space dedicated to underrepresented students. I was talking to co-workers (other graduate students) and I said the word "ain't". Before I could even finish my sentence, I was interrupted by an office support specialist, who happened to be a white woman telling me that "ain't" is not a word and I argued that it was (Clayton, 2014). She told me I was wrong, and that I was setting a bad example for my students by not speaking "properly". I responded as someone who fervently studies linguistic and rhetorical practices, especially AAE, that I know "ain't" is a word, but I was ignored (Clayton, 2014). This is not the first time I have been confronted with these comments, but I never get used to it. Insecurities about my language practices surfaced and even though I knew I was right, for a moment I doubted myself. With these experiences in the forefront of my mind, I understand how the undergraduate students who speak AAE feel in these same spaces.

Often the language and rhetorical practices of Black students have been explored as marginalized and as a result of these marginalized rhetorics, fields such as composition studies have cast these students as "basic writers" (Royster & Williams, 1999; Shaughnessy,1979). According to Balester (1993), Black students struggle to negotiate an academic identity in a

"foreign" (PWI) space. While this is true to some extent, Royster and Williams (1999) challenge the notions of Black students' lack of knowledges in college spaces and uses Killingsworth to critique the field of Composition Studies:

> One of the strongest threads of research and criticism in composition studies reveals the inherent consistency, the rhetorical integrity, even the brilliant folkways that emerge among students whom we have labeled "basic writers" (often as a way of predicting their failure) (Killingworth as cited in Balester, 1993, p. vii).

Killingsworth's critique is a reminder that certain language and literacy practices are still rendered illegitimate in college writing spaces. Thus, composition spaces are assuming that these students would not or could not adhere to the standards of the university. When there is still a stigma associated with languages such as AAE, it becomes increasingly difficult to engage in discourse about the legitimacy of AAE. This task became more challenging for me when I became an instructor for a dual writing and public speaking course. The course is a combination of both a public speaking and composition one general education (introduction to college writing) requirement, and the learning outcome is to develop comprehensive writing and public speaking skills. Many students are apprehensive about classes that focus on writing and speaking, and they often expressed a sense of dread in my classes when they had a major assignment. While the majority of my students were white, I had a handful of students of color in each of my classes, a few of them of Black AAE speakers. This explicitly exposed me to the experiences of AAE speakers in the classroom. For instance, Diana (a Black AAE speaker) once gave a speech and said the word "finna". Immediately, I saw her face fall and the next day she came to my office hours and apologized for being unprofessional and expressed worry that her grade would suffer for her perceived "mistake". I tried to reassure her "finna" was not an error, but Diana wrote it off as me only attempting to make her feel better.

Kynard (2013), argues that spaces such as freshman composition classes serve as a

"gatekeeper for success in the white, bourgeois literacy code of college" and it is also an "important lens into the ongoing racialized and political boundaries of who can and should have a right to higher education" (p.8). This particular gatekeeping contributes to reinforcement of power for certain types of literacy and language practices, usually revolving around Standard English in campus spaces. One of my negative linguistic experiences happened in a workplace setting, a space outside the classroom. Therefore, when reflecting back on the interactions mentioned above, I believe that Kynard's argument can apply to a multitude of college settings including classrooms, workspaces and even informal social spaces.

"Standardized" English is the language accepted in school environments, but the reality is that many students are not solely speakers of Standard English. Within the context of educational settings, AAE is often a dialect loaded with negative connotations. At the elementary and secondary level, misunderstandings of AAE are not uncommon, and in some situations speaking AAE can impact educational achievement (Delpit, 1998, 2008; Smitherman, 1981; Souto-Manning, 2009; Perry and Delpit, 1998; Piestrup, 1973). Often when we discuss the "failures" and negative perceptions of the knowledges that Black students bring with them to school, we overlook the strengths of their practices. So, what happens when undergraduate AAE speaking students are navigating a new educational space like a PWI campus?

Research in higher education about minority students' access and retention has focused on structural barriers rather than on how students actually negotiate these barriers. Furthermore, there is a lack of research about linguistic minority students and their experiences (Oropeza et. al., 2010). As we can see with the examples of Patrice and Diana, the questioning of their linguistic ability was rooted in experiences within a college writing course. While writing is centralized as a main focus in these spaces, questions of language practices are present and also

need to be addressed. The purpose of this study is to understand how AAE speaking students understand their language and writing practices and experiences with language in PWI spaces while also applying a framework that allows for the exploration of the complexity of Black language practices.

To accomplish this, I propose the following research questions:

1. What are AAE speaking students' understandings of the larger discourses about Black students in PWI contexts?
    a. How do AAE students' experiences contribute to the larger discourses about Black students in an institutional context?
2. What are AAE speakers' meta-pragmatic discourses (self-awareness) about their linguistic practices and repertories in school (K-12 and postsecondary) settings?
3. How do the AAE speakers' actual language practice(s) compare to their perceived language practices?
4. What language related experiences become salient or emerge in students' narratives about interactions in various campus spaces (i.e. classrooms, casual social interactions, extracurricular organizations)?
    a. How do students' writing experiences in college classrooms contribute to their perceptions of their linguistic and writing abilities?

Role of the Researcher

To understand how race works in my study about AAE speakers, I had to become conscious of my language socialization and what it means for how I understand my black identity. The first moment of language socialization that I can recall is when I was in the second grade. My teacher, Ms. Carter, a Black woman, whom at the time I convinced was the best teacher in the world because of the dedication and care she showed through every lesson plan and her attention to students. One day, our bell ringer assignment was to write about the activities we did over the weekend. When we finished, she asked us to share. I raised my hand, eager to participate. Ms. Carter called on me and I said "I be playing-" Ms. Carter immediately interrupted me and told me that I knew better than to bring bad grammar into her classroom.

From that moment I became silent and I never told anyone what happened that day. I was still a "good" student but I was always wondering if what I said would come out "right". Eventually, I started to believe what I had to say was insignificant and I lost confidence in my academic ability. This was the first time I remember being told that who I am was not enough, but it would not be the last. My language is tied to my family and ultimately my blackness. If Ms. Carter told me the way I spoke was wrong, did it also mean that my mother, sisters and ancestors were wrong?

About 12 years later, I was sitting in a linguistic anthropology class titled "Communication and Culture" and my professor assigned a chapter from a linguistic anthropology reader edited by Alessandro Duranti (2001). It was Marcyliena Morgan's *The African American speech community: Reality and sociolinguists*. I remember reading Morgan's discussion of the history of scholars conducting research on AAE and she noted,

> Few linguists of the day could remain silent when asked 'what is Black English? What is it good for?' Their nearly unanimous response to attacks from educational and psychological quarters was that AAE, while different from American English, is as logical and as capable of intelligent ideas as any other language or dialect (Morgan, 2001, p.75).

I remember this moment because I repeatedly read this passage attempting to process the meaning. As a speaker of AAE, I had no idea people, especially with PhDs, cared about what I had considered slang or improper language use. From that moment, I became highly driven to learn whatever I could about AAE. Morgan's chapter referenced Geneva Smitherman and at the time, I did not know anything about Smitherman's work. Morgan used Langston Hughes' *Simple* stories and Smitherman's analysis of the stories to argue "African American linguistic reality was framed by the public use of language, a use that accommodated dominant racist and class ideology and discourse concerning African Americans while indirectly resisting it" (Morgan, 2001, p.80).

After seeing how Morgan used Smitherman's work, I read Smitherman for myself. When I read *Talkin and Testifyin* for the first time, I was forced to question everything I believed about Black language and identity. I was also angry that I spent my life never knowing the history or legitimacy of AAE. I started to think about other children who were silenced through linguistic and racial inequality in education. I will not pretend that I have not been complicit and a part of the inherent racism that Standard English hegemony produces. I once believed that if we just spoke "right" then we would achieve social mobility. Initially, I did not explicitly connect the perceptions of my language use to my Black body. It took time to realize race played a significant role in how I think about language. The controversy and debates concerning AAE in schools imply deeply racist structural issues not only in schools, but also in American society towards Black communities.

These moments have contributed to my commitment to challenging the dominant beliefs and the structural consequences that AAE speakers continually face, but there is still an uncertainty that I experience with my research. Smitherman would say this is part of the *push-pull dynamic* within Black diaspora. The loss of connection to place, language and culture can have severe psychological and emotional affects. In these instances, my personal struggles and uncertainty are my political and academic struggles as well. This is what motivates me to work for ways that AAE speakers' can legitimize and value our own experiences and create safe spaces for linguistic minorities. Language is a complex phenomenon that is strongly connected to an individual's sense of identity and group consciousness (Smitherman, 1977). In *Talkin' and Testifyin',* Smitherman spends time establishing the history and roots of AAE. Other language scholars such as Alim and Baugh follow in Smitherman's path and draw "attention to two historically neglected dimensions of the Black American experience – the linguistic legacy and related educational legacy of the African slave trade or what Smitherman calls African Holocaust (Alim & Baugh, 2006, p. 3).

The acknowledgement of the historical background of AAE is instrumental to understanding contemporary racial and linguistic issues. Our history reflects the present and it is a part of who we are. In other words, being Black in the U.S. is complicated. Often our truths are unacknowledged. We have been scrutinized and subjected to others' definitions of who we are and these definitions have been used to manage Black bodies. It is important for me to deconstruct my own socialization while also attempting to disrupt hegemonic practices and structures within my research. As I reflect upon my experiences with race and language, I think about how I always consciously tried to define who I was in terms of other people's definitions. Regardless of where I go to school or which dialect I speak; I will always be Black. This is my

context and because of the way race is constructed in the U.S., perceptions of my language practices are connected with perceptions of my body.

With this in mind, a major part of how I think about research requires me, the researcher, to address my positionality as a Black woman and AAE speaker who is acquiring a doctoral degree. How do I need to understand the world around me when I conduct research? Part of my epistemology is personal. Before I entered graduate school and arguably before I entered kindergarten, I came with my own knowledges about my language, culture, and community. What I know about AAE informs how I approach my research. As I progress in graduate school, my positionality continues to evolve, so I have to ask myself, what it does mean to be a Black woman scholar who studies issues of race and language. Hare (1973) notes that "on the shoulders of the Black scholar falls an enormous task. (S)he must decolonize (or her) mind so that (S)he may effectively guide other intellectuals and students in their search for liberation" (p.68). To accomplish the decolonization of the mind, scholars have to develop "new and appropriate norms and values, new institutional structures, and in order to be effective in this regard, (S)he must also develop and be guided by a new ideology" (p.76). This is not an instant realization; it is a process to rethink the ways in which we have been racially and linguistically socialized. Walters (1973) emphasized that graduate students need not only methodological training, but also substantive training for our research to be accurate and effective:

> Treating the substance of Black life as something secondhand, which can be 'picked up' at will, or as something 'we already know' which does not need systematic and constant elucidation, clarification and development is an insult to the quality and complexity of the Black experience and perpetuates the graduate schools' racist attitude toward the value of the study of Black life in general (pgs. 204-205).

Furthermore, when thinking about my positionality as a researcher and writer in conjunction with my identity as a Black AAE speaking woman, I must explicitly acknowledge that I am not

objective. Emerson et al. (2011) put forth ideas about how to better understand our social identities and how it affects the way we see the world. No one is neutral and my identities shape how I see the world (Mendoza-Denton, 2008). When it comes to showcasing data, the various interactions and conversations I choose to focus on are connected to my positionality. Being a Black AAE speaker, who is from Chicago, I am definitely an insider which heightens my awareness of the linguistic and racial interactions within the institution. At times, this insider role has helped me gain (and hopefully continue to gain) access to information that I might not have if I did not have a connection with the participants. While I have some identities in common with the participants, I must acknowledge that my affiliation with the university has further removed me from my participants. The participants know me as an academic advisor, writing teacher, tutor and administrator. Even though I no longer occupy these roles in the same ways, they still see me as being connected to their academic progress through the institution. I must acknowledge the multiplicity of my identity: the AAE speaker, the student, the advisor, the teacher, the administrator, and the researcher who wants to better understand the linguistic, writing and racial experiences of my participants.

Significant Terms

- African-American or Black- These are terms used to define people of African descent. In this dissertation, I use African American and Black interchangeably, but they are not completely synonymous. Technically, Black is a racial identification while African-American is an identifier of ethnicity and/or nationality. Therefore, you can identify as Black and not as African - American and vice versa. In my study, the

participants identified themselves as Black or African American but did not prefer over the other when asked.

- African American English (AAE) - Over the past few decades, Black people's language in the United States have been defined with the following terms: Ebonics, African American Vernacular English, Black English, African American Language and African American English etc. There is no consensus among scholars about what terms should be used to encompass all the aspects of AAE. Though, I use the term AAE, other scholars may not use the same term, but refer to the same concept. For the purpose of this study these terms will be interchangeable.
- Composition studies/Writing Studies: These are the fields that mainly study college composition classes and heavily focus on pedagogical and institutional approaches to writing and the teaching of writing.
- Composition/Rhetoric courses: These are college classes that are designed to prepare students, particularly first year students, with knowledge about academic English and the genres and expectations of writing within institutional settings.
- Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) – For the purposes of this study, I define Predominantly White Institutions as colleges and/or universities where most of the student population identifies racially as white. Additionally, PWI spaces have a history of discriminatory and exclusionary policies and practices that affect students from low socioeconomic classes, first generation college students and students of color.
- Basic Writer- a common phrase used in composition studies/writing studies literature to define students who have not had extensive experience in the genres of academic

writing. This term operates as a code that refer to students of color and poor white students from rural areas and is part of a deficit approach to teaching writers who are from diverse backgrounds (Shaughnessy, 1977; Royster and Williams, 1999).

- Language - We often get caught up in the naming process when it comes to categories of social identities, especially when it comes to language. A dialect is a language and a language is a dialect. When I refer to AAE as a language or dialect, they are mutually exclusive terms.
- Dialect: dialect comes from the Greek word *dialektos,* which loosely translates to "manner of speaking". The term dialect can be used in many ways, but the two most common are regional dialect and sociolect.
    - Regional dialect refers to a language spoken in a particular region of a country (Midwestern, Southern, West or East Coast).
    - Sociolect- language (Spanglish, Chicanx, Appalachian) that a particular social group uses, AAE would be included in this group.
- Register variation- language varying according to the social context. Register variations are present within dialects and do not simply refer to the dialects shifts.

Organization of Chapters

Chapter one introduced the topic of my dissertation, the significance of study, the research questions and the role that my positionality plays in this study.

In chapter two, I review the relevant literature. My dissertation is an interdisciplinary conversation. Therefore, I have developed this study by attempting to understand the various perspectives and manifestations that language work can take. The literature review is divided into five major sections: language ideologies, history of AAE, AAE in the classroom context,

AAE and attempted language policies and AAE in college settings and Composition/Writing Studies. The literature reviewed in chapter two outlines the research conducted in areas that emerge as prevalent in the forthcoming findings chapters.

Chapter three explains the methodology, methods and theoretical frameworks, I used for to explore the research questions I posed for this dissertation. The theoretical frameworks I used were Ethnography of Communication and Critical Race Theory, which I combined to develop the term racial communicative competence. The ultimate goal of my research is to investigate students' navigation of higher education spaces through their linguistic and writing practices and how they understand this navigation. I introduce the site as well as the participants and focal participants. I then review my data collection process and data analysis procedures.

Chapter four is a finding chapter that delves into how the participants of this study experience and understand the dialect of AAE. An essential part of this study is to develop an understanding of the participants' knowledge about their language repertoires and how these repertoires in turn are perceived by others in various spaces. Then, with the scholarship of Langston Hughes, Derrick Bell and Charles Mills, I consider how race plays into these perceptions and the false premise of Standard English as social mobility for Black AAE speaking students.

Chapter five, a finding chapter, explores the role that composition classes play in AAE speakers' understanding of how their language and writing practices are comprehended. Composition classes often erase AAE speakers' racial and linguistic identity. Furthermore, I argue that when the students understand how they are perceived racially, rhetorically and linguistically in these spaces, they then construct and implement strategies that resist the

mainstream narratives about language and writing, which often exclude them. I use Harris's *Whiteness as Property* to explore notions of race and language in the composition classroom.

In chapter six, I return to the main arguments I have made throughout my findings chapters. Students' relationships to AAE are complex due to the institutional racism that composition classes reinforce and ultimately use as a method of gatekeeping. I argue that my focal participants, along with the other participants have an acute awareness about the role that race plays in others' perceptions of their linguistic and writing abilities. I end this chapter with a discussion about the implications of this study for teaching AAE speakers and larger institutional practices, as well as the limitations and possible directions for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

My dissertation is an interdisciplinary conversation. I chose to use literature from different fields because it can provide a holistic understanding of my research phenomenon. Therefore, I have developed this study by attempting to understand the various perspectives and manifestations that language work can take. The literature review is divided into five major sections: language ideologies, history of AAE, AAE in the classroom context, AAE and attempted language policies and AAE in college settings and composition/writing studies. The literature reviewed in this chapter outlines the research conducted in areas that emerge as prevalent in the forthcoming findings chapters.

Language ideologies

Language ideologies are conceptualizations about languages, speakers, and discursive practices (Krovisty, 2001; Ahearn, 2012; Gal, 1989). More specifically, language ideologies consist of attitudes, opinions and beliefs that we all have about language. These ideologies are embedded with political and social interests and are shaped within a cultural context. According to Foucault, power and knowledges are tied together and understanding power dynamics can "illustrate that the deployment of linguistic variants in conversation can provide fresh evidence of such symbolic practices" (As cited in Gal, 1989, p.637). Furthermore, language variation is embedded within a social, cultural, historical and political context and how the speaker understands these contexts (Gal, 1989; Ahearn, 2012). Gal also uses Bourdieu's theory of symbolic domination, which establishes a power dynamic between the "standard" and minority languages, but Woolard (1985) argues it is not that simple, linguistic minorities are not consumed by the "standard". It is always important to note that just because a prevalent language ideology exists in society does not mean that the standard is the only language used in everyday

practices. Bourdieu's (1991) work explores the concept of language as an "instrument of action (or power)". Power and capital is the primary subject in this case, he argues, "the structure of linguistic production relation depends on symbolic power relation between two speakers" (p.648). Looking beyond linguistic competence, Bourdieu argues that along with other things, social statuses of the speakers and the context must be considered in order to give a holistic account of speech practices.

Standard English hegemony is prevalent worldwide. In the U.S., mainstream Standard English is considered the norm and valued above every other dialect of English and other languages like Spanish. Most of the time other dialects of English are not even recognized as legitimate. Due to the racial climate of U.S., how we conceive language is not just about words, it has racial, economic and social implications. For instance, *American Tongues*, a documentary made in the 1980s, takes a look at various dialects in contemporary U.S. English, the statuses and judgments that accompany them. Ultimately, *American Tongues* showed that social and racial attitudes are associated with dialects and accents and these attitudes were not always positive. What are the consequences that can arise from these perceptions about language? They end up reinforcing Standard English hegemony and operating as a form of oppression for communities whose language do not align with Standard English.

American Tongues is a brutally honest representation about how people associate certain characteristics to particular groups through language use, this is called indexicality. When words are indexically related to an object or aspect of the world, it means that we recognize that words carry with them a power that goes beyond the description and identification of people, objects, properties and events (Alim and Smitherman, 2012). Furthermore, it works to identify how "language becomes a tool through which our social and cultural world is constantly described,

evaluated and reproduced" (Ahearn, 2012, p.29). Therefore, indexicality plays a major role in how we think about the world. For example, it is common for people to use terms such as "good" grammar or "bad" English and these terms often can index someone's level of intelligence or ability.

Generally, there are two different ways that people understand grammar: prescriptively and descriptively. Prescriptive grammar is the "official" rules of a language that are intended to teach people how they should speak or write according to a seemingly arbitrary standard (Wolfram, 1999). No one can really explain where these rules come from and this is a part of Standard English hegemony. It is reinforced as the "right" way of speaking. Descriptive grammar looks to describe and understand the rules that various speakers of a language actually follow; this is what sociolinguists are interested in. Dialects are defined as a social or geographic variety of a language (Wolfram, 1999) and a standard language is a dialect of a language that is used institutionally and is usually promoted as being the "right" and only language.

The idea of a standard language can give the illusion that other dialects do not exist and if they are acknowledged, they are not seen as equivalent. Non-standard refers to dialects that are not the standard and they are usually devalued. With this mind, it is imperative that we know about people who speak different varieties of languages. One particular dialect of a language is not better than the others; these ideas are socially constructed so they can be socially deconstructed. Understanding the power of language and language ideology, lays the foundation to understand how and why Standard English works to erase and discredit dialects such as AAE. When this happens, it becomes essential to understand the history of the forgotten dialects.

History of African American English

While a particular dialect of English was becoming the standard, another dialect of English was being developed; AAE (at least a form of it) began in the 16th century during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, one the most notorious events in American and British history (McCrum et al. 2002 & Smitherman, 1977). Out of all the dialects spoken in the United States no other language has been "deplored, debated, and defended" (McCrum et al., 2002) like AAE. AAE has a strong and rich history and is a combination of English and Congo-Niger (this includes: Yoruba, Igbo, Fula, Shona, Zulu and Wolof) languages (McCrum et al., 2002; Rickford, 1999; Baugh, 2000). It has its own grammar, syntax, lexicon, word structure, and phonetics, which are distinctly different from Standard English (Rickford, 1999). More aptly, AAE is described as "an Africanized form of English reflecting Black America's linguistic-cultural African heritage and the conditions of servitude, oppression and life in America" (Smitherman, 1977, p. 2). Smitherman's definition of AAE is dependent on a strong connection to Africa. West African cultures and the American slave trade played a major a role in telling the story of AAE. The way that Smitherman intricately weaves the history of AAE to African countries establishes a home, community, and a connection to a space for Black Americans. It is important to acknowledge Black people's roots and cultures that enslavement attempted to erase from our memories. Even though AAE has lost many aspects of its African roots, the language is still prevalent and practiced in many U.S. Black communities. Furthermore, "an individual's language is intricately bound up with his or her sense of identity and group consciousness. In the history of man's inhumanity to man, it is clearly understandable why the conqueror forces his victim to learn his language" (Smitherman, 1977, p.171).

AAE is a part of a scattered family that includes, but is not limited to African pidgins, Caribbean Creoles and Southern American English (McCrum et al., 2002). AAE consists of the following linguistic characteristics:

- The use of the verb “be” to indicate something recurring or continuous over time.
- The deletion of a form of the verb “to be.”
- The use of the third person singular verbs without adding the “s” or “z” sound.
- The use of the “f” sound for the “the” sound at the end or in the middle of a word.
- The use of an extra word to signify plurals rather than adding an "s" to the noun.
- The deletion of “s” that indicate possessives.
- The removal of “l” or “r” sounds in words.
- The use of words with different meanings.
- The lack of emphasis on the use of tense in verbs.
- The deletion of final consonants.
- The use of double negatives
- The use of the “d” sound for the “th” sound at the beginning of a word
- Omission of noun possessive
- Omission of noun plural
- Omission of third person singular present tense marked
- Omission of to be forms such as "is" & "are"
- Present tense use regardless of person, number
- Lack of person-number agreement with past and present forms of to be
- Present tense forms of auxiliary "have" omitted
- Past tense endings omitted
- Past "was" used regardless of number, person
- Multiple negatives, each additional negative form adding emphasis to the negative meaning
- "None" substituted for "any"
- Perfective construction; "been" used to indicate that an action took place in the distant past
- "Done" combined with a past tense form to indicate that in action was started and completed
- The form "be" used as the main verb
- Distributive "be" used to indicate actions and events overtime
- Pronoun used to restate the subject
- "Them" substituted for "those"
- Future tense "is" are replaced by "gonna"
- "At" used at the end of "where" questions
- "Does" replaced by "do"

(Green, 2012; Smitherman, 1977; Rickford, 1999)

AAE is part of a larger tradition of African American rhetoric that not only encompasses the verbal but also non-verbal and written communication (Smitherman, 1995, Williams-Farrier,

2017). Common aspects of African American rhetorical traditions include signifying, repetition and narrativizing, call and response, sermonizing, playing the dozens and improvisation. African American oral traditions are not bound to ideologies of Western "logical" sequences, which is a reason for the conflict in college spaces. In many ways, African American rhetoric is more literary and lyrical than the western models taught in U.S. schools.

Black Americans primarily speak AAE and since its origin, the general population of the U.S. has not perceived it as a real dialect. It is considered by most to be an illiterate, illogical code without rules (Freeman, 1982; Speicher, 1992 & Warhaugh, 1999). When AAE was first described in written from, opinions were stated as facts. These perceived facts then produced false notions about the lack of intelligence in Black Americans. Even though these theories have been academically disapproved, these beliefs are still prevalent in contemporary times. Some of the general perceptions and descriptions of AAE when it was first studied in late 19th century was as follows:

> The humor and naiveté of the Negro are features which must not be overlooked in gauging his intellectual caliber and timbre; much of his baby talk ... the slang which is an ingrained part of his being as deep-dyed as his skin... the African (Harrison as cited in Smitherman 1999, p.72).

Harrison's remarks reduced AAE to childlike and illegitimate utterances. These publications were detrimental to the perceptions of AAE in education. In contrast, scholars such as Geneva Smitherman, William Labov, John Rickford, John Baugh and many more have done extensive research on AAE, and argue that it is a valid dialect, and it should be accepted as such (Baugh, 2000; Labov, 1972; Rickford, 1999 & Smitherman, 1977). In the world of language studies, AAE is recognized as a legitimate dialect. Unfortunately, in practice AAE is still viewed by the general public as nothing other than bad grammar.

AAE and Attempted Language Policies

AAE has been the center of many debates about the education of Black students. Many educators have questioned the role that AAE should have in education. At the policy and legal level, a formal shift in the recognition of AAE as a legitimate dialect in education was the *Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School Children v. the Ann Arbor School District* (1977-1979) case. A group of single Black mothers from low-income housing projects sued the district. The mothers argued their children were being treated unfairly in their predominantly white school because of their language practices (Freeman, 1982).

After a two-year trial and many expert witnesses like Geneva Smitherman and William Labov, the court came to a decision. The court found that a language barrier existed between the plaintiffs' children and the teachers in the school. MLK teachers failed to take into account the home language of the children (Labov, 1982). The courts acknowledged that the dialect spoken by the children was a version of English called "Black English" and this language barrier was one of the causes for the children's reading problems. Furthermore, this impeded the children's participation in the school's educational program (Smitherman, 1981). The statute enacted in 1974 by congress directed the school system to take appropriate action for teachers and students to overcome the language barrier.

As a result of these findings, the Ann Arbor school board was directed to file a plan of "appropriate action." The court order required the school district to submit (within 30 days) a proposed plan defining the exact steps to be taken to help the teachers of the plaintiff's children at the King School to identify children speaking Black English and use that knowledge to teach the students how to read and write in Standard English (Joiner, 1979).

The ruling of the case ended in favor of the students and many people thought perceptions of AAE would change once it was publically "proven" that AAE was a legitimate dialect (Labov, 1982). The court decision was a first step to help AAE speaking students achieve academically, but problems arose when too much faith was put into the legal system. Judge Joiner emphasized that the courtroom "was not the place to test the validity of educational programs and pedagogical methods. It is not for the courts to harmonize conflicting objectives by making judgments involving issues of pedagogy" (Joiner, 1979, p.5). These statements were an attempt to point out that the *Ann Arbor* case was an individual one and not necessarily the standard rule. The court was dealing with legal obligations imposed by the U.S. Congress upon the school district, which was to uphold Section 1703 (1974) of Title 20, a statue that says:

> No state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin, by… the failure by an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs (Rickford, 1995, p.89).

The case had significant limitations; the decision only affected one elementary school and was only enforced for one year. The program was deliberately underfunded, and there were no parental, linguistic or educational representatives to contribute to the pedagogical practices (Smitherman, 2004). Even though the *Ann Arbor* case recognized that teacher perceptions affect AAE speaking students' achievement, it did not fully legitimatize AAE, which further reinforced Standard English as the more valuable language. In the court Memorandum *Opinion and Order,* it was shown that the court still did not accept that AAE was equal to Standard English. Judge Joiner stated "Black English is not a language used by the mainstream society, Black or white. It is not acceptable method of communication in the educational world, in the commercial community, in the community of the arts and sciences or among professionals" (Joiner, 1979, p.5).

The ruling also caused indignation and frustration in the minds of the general public. AAE was called many things during the trial like “Black Bottom”, “Black Boogaloo”, “Black Out”, “Black List” and "Black Balled” (Freeman, 1984). All of these expressions have negative connotations associated with them, which did not help the cause. Furthermore, the case did not question the deeper conceptions that we have about Standard English and AAE. Standard English was still presented as more valuable and useful than AAE.

The *Ann Arbor* case did lead to events that had a huge impact on future school board decisions. The subject of AAE and its place in education was revisited in 1996 when the Oakland School board passed a controversial resolution (Delpit & Perry, 1998). A large number of Black students were not academically succeeding in the Oakland School District; they had the lowest GPAs, highest numbers of referrals to special education (because teachers had mistaken characteristics of AAE for a sign of delayed speech development) and highest suspension rates (Delpit & Perry, 1998). After much research, the board concluded that misunderstandings about the language students spoke were one of the reasons why their Black students were not succeeding. The board passed a resolution which recognized “Ebonics” (AAE), a term originally coined in the 1970s by Robert Williams, which translates to “Ebony Phonetics,” as the primary language most Black students, spoke in their school district. The resolution also made resources available for non-AAE speaking teachers. The teachers had an option to participate in the Standard English Proficiency (SEP) program. SEP started in California to educate teachers who work with Black children and other children who spoke a language other than Standard English about the historical and linguistic foundations of AAE and other marginalized languages (Delpit & Perry, 1998).

The program provided teachers with techniques that have been shown to help the students

code-switch into Standard American English and learn communicative competence (Perry, 1998). Code switching allows a person to both understand and convey thoughts in a linguistic repertoire or language that fits the context of the situation (Delpit 1998). The SEP program emerged after decades of debate, political struggle, and frustration over the poor academic performance of a disproportionate number of Black children in the state. Part of the Oakland resolution is as follows:

> Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Education officially recognizes the existence and the cultural and historic bases of West and Niger-Congo African Language Systems, and each language as the predominantly primary language of African American students; and be it further resolved that the Board of Education hereby adopts the report recommendations and attached Policy Statement of the District's African American Task Force on language stature of African American speech; and be it further resolved that the Superintendent in conjunction with her staff shall immediately devise and implement the best possible academic program for imparting instruction to African American students in their primary language for the combined purposes of maintaining the legitimacy and richness of such language whether it is known as "Ebonics," "African Language Systems," "Pan African Communication Behaviors" or other descriptions, and to facilitate their acquisition and mastery of English language skills….(Delpit & Perry, 1998, p.146)

Like other similar programs, the Oakland resolution was widely misunderstood as replacing Standard English with AAE. The resolution gained national attention and was criticized by many, including Black Americans who spoke the language (Delpit & Perry, 1998). The misunderstanding of the resolution created more problems than solutions because the media coverage only further reinforced the stigma of AAE. The board wisely realized chastising and correcting AAE speakers was not the most effective method and took many risks in order to recognize AAE as its own language. Though many argued the school board did not have the power to make that decision.

Ultimately, the entire district wanted was provide their Black students with resources that would help them have an equitable education. The board believed in accepting AAE, their students would be more successful. The goal of wanting to honor AAE speaking students'

cultural and linguistic heritage while preparing them to live and work in a standardized English-speaking society was lost upon the public (Smitherman, 2004). Both the *Ann Arbor* decision and the Oakland debate have started the process towards a better understanding of language variation among Black students, but there are still many obstacles. These cases did publically challenge assumptions about language variation and expose how non-standard languages struggle for recognition and against stigmas.

U.S. public schools refused to incorporate the needs of non-Standard English speakers until districts and courts forced schools to deal with them. The *Ann Arbor* case set a linguistic precedent but had many limitations. The Oakland resolution was a national disaster; it was perceived in such a harsh light that it hurt AAE speakers. The reactions to the Oakland resolution made it clear that public knowledge and perception of AAE had changed very little (Smitherman, 2004) since the *Ann Arbor* case. These two historical events are similar because they both focused on the lack of academic success of Black students in the U.S. school system. Both groups believed that language was one of the major causes for the failure of their students and they were both local events that did not have much impact on national educational policy of AAE (Smitherman, 2004).

The power that Standard English holds makes it very difficult to legitimize AAE. After all of the court cases and debates, there are still only few programs in place to help speakers of non-Standard varieties of English including AAE. Baugh makes the point of saying "AAVE (AAE) is afforded little or no respect in most educational contexts. This lack of respect may very well be the primary reason why cases like King and incidents like 'the Ebonics controversy' continue to emerge." (Ball & Alim, 2006, p.112).

AAE in the K-12 Classroom Context: Practices and Perceptions

Research in the field of education shows that lack of acknowledgement of the language varieties children bring to school has negative effects on the child's learning environment, specifically in the case of AAE speakers (Delpit, 2002; Smitherman, 1999; Baugh, 2000 & Cazden, 2001). Correcting a child that does not speak the Standard will not help the situation neither will telling them that their English is "bad" or "broken". Evidence shows that students can become more distant from school and develop tense relationships with their peers and teachers if their language is dismissed and berated (Souto-Manning, 2009). Populations labeled "nontraditional" on account of race, language, cultural traditions, and historical struggle constitute a large number of students entering public institutions (e.g., classrooms, universities, service organizations). Even in the face of this reality, a recurring challenge for many educators involves locating actual practices by which to affirm the rights of linguistically diverse students in classrooms. The following cases represent how AAE is stigmatized in school settings, the very stigmas that the *Ann Arbor* case and Oakland School board fought so diligently against.

Schools often have historically contributed to Standard English ideologies by reinforcing and rewarding Standard English language practices. In a school setting, whose job is it to teach these practices? Teachers. Teachers are important because they are often mediators between the school curriculum and the students and they evaluate students' progress. Therefore, common research topics are teachers, the education of Black students and how misunderstandings of AAE can lead to issues with academic development.

According to Dyson and Smitherman (2009), there are two main issues that affect the learning environment of AAE speakers: "(l) the continuing linkage of AAL with perceptions and attitudes about African Americans (whether explicitly articulated or not), and (2) teacher

knowledge, or lack of such, about AAL (AAE), its history, and its linguistic and socio-cultural patterns." (p. 981). In the 1970s, there was a rise in studying specifically how Black AAE speaking students are impacted in the subject of reading in the classroom. Researchers found that Black AAE speaking children can have a more difficult time learning to read. There is nothing about the structure of AAE that creates this problem, but it is often because there is a lack of appropriate instruction for the students (Delpit, 2002). Issues can also arise when teachers confuse the teaching of reading with the teaching of a new language form. Teachers are more likely to correct AAE miscues than the miscues that were non-dialect related (Delpit, 2002). Reading comprehension and language learning are two very different subject matters. Confusing the two can cause misunderstandings between the teacher and the student (Piestrup, 1973; Delpit 2002; Cunningham, 1976). Piestrup's (1973) work has been essential to understanding teachers' level of awareness of how AAE affects learning outcomes for Black AAE speaking students. Teachers' awareness of language variation and teaching styles influenced how teachers interacted with the students. This could lead to lower reading scores. The study showed teachers did not always understand Black children's language practices and how this can create tensions and unproductive learning environments.

Cunningham's work builds on Piestrup by arguing:

> If teachers do not adjust their instruction to the difference between Black dialect and Standard English and if, more specifically, they respond to Black dialect translations during oral reading errors, Black dialect speakers are handicapped in learning to read not by their language but by their teacher's reaction to the language (Cunningham., 1976, p. 643).

Cunningham's research found that teachers did respond more to Black dialect miscues and uses her findings to push for teacher education curriculum and practices that effectively trains teachers to teach with dialect variation in mind. To remedy these misunderstandings of AAE in the classroom, Goodman (1970) proposed some ways that teachers could use miscues to form

new teaching strategies. In addition, Dyson and Smitherman's *The Right (Write) Start: African American Language and the Discourse of Sounding Right* (2009) is an ethnographic study that focused on a six-year-old AAE speaker, Tionna, and her writing practices and teacher misunderstandings of AAE in the classroom. Like many other studies before it, this work further shows not only how important it is to understand AAE practices, but also listening to children's voices and experiences can be a valuable pedagogical resource. Dyson and Smitherman also show that the same problems AAE speaking students faced in the 1970s are still very real and just as unresolved in contemporary classrooms as they were four decades ago.

Scholars such as Jensen, Bernstein, and Bereiter have claimed that the language of Black children provides evidence of home environments lacking in verbal interaction with adults, abstract reasoning, fluent speech, and long-range goals. Labov's *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (1972), addressed the same question that the Oakland school board asked: How can we improve Black children's performance in reading and writing? The question had already assumed some urgency in the late 1960s, and linguists and educational psychologists were already studying the speech patterns of Black youth in several large U.S. cities. But much of the research was based on an assumption that these language patterns were defects resulting from the children's impoverished cultural backgrounds. Most of this research was based on interviews with young individuals, and the children's limited responses led many to conclude that inner-city Black youth suffered from a lack of verbal stimulation and a primitive verbal culture (Labov, 1972). Labov and his research team used different ways to collect their data such as spending time talking with gang members, talking to vacation day camp participants, and other children in several large cities. They found that the speech patterns came from a well-established verbal culture (Labov, 1972). This culture had produced a distinct

English dialect, one that had its own internal logic and followed consistent rules of construction and pronunciation (Labov, 1973; Smitherman, 1977).

The most extreme view was held by Bereiter and Jensen and they argued that Black children are non-verbal and had limited speech. When certain varieties of speech are categorized as lacking in the very attributes that distinguish human language it categorizes certain varieties as inhuman (Labov, 1972). The verbal behavior that Bereiter observed led to conversations which consisted mostly of phrases and silence. Labov (1972) asserts that such observations should not be rejected as false because he had similar samples of verbal behavior, in which a Black child being interviewed said nothing; however, Labov considers social situations to be the most powerful factor to produce verbal behavior. The asymmetrical relationship between a white adult and a Black child is not conducive to detailed conversations. From Labov's perspective, the child is obeying the "speak when spoken to" rule and saying no more than he feels he should, given the circumstances. For instance, a child who may appear in one situation to be nonverbal may be talkative in another. This is demonstrated in two conservations that involve a child named Leon. In one conversation about television, Leon responds to Clarence a total of 10 times. His first response is four words long. The next seven responses are only single words, the ninth is two words, and the last barely qualifies as a response at all. This contrasts sharply with the conversation involving Clarence, Leon, and another student. In this context, Leon also responds ten times, but only two of his responses are monosyllabic (Labov, 1972).

Bereiter also believed that the lack of the verb "to be" indicated badly connected words. A characteristic of AAE is copula deletion, but Labov notes that this deletion is a characteristic of languages that have "higher" value such as Russian, Hungarian, and Arabic. There is nothing illogical about those languages. Therefore, Bereiter's conclusions are based on status, not logic.

Perhaps the most destructive description of Black intelligence was made by Jensen, who promoted almost half of poor Black children had intellectual disabilities on the basis of intelligence tests, the results of which are predictable, given the evidence presented earlier in Labov's work. Since sociolinguistics demonstrates clearly the fact of language variation, the field may be used to refute "evidence" of genetic inferiority in Black children by demonstrating these instruments are inappropriate for measuring the intelligence of children other than those who speak Standard English. Therefore, the reason for high rates of failure to acquire literacy among Black children is not psycholinguistic (Labov, 1973).

Labov's perspective on the situation took a different approach; he did not agree with the deficit approaches that the many linguists at the time were using to talk about language variation. Labov's research challenged the established thinking of the time, and he argued that in failing to notice the logic of AAE and its ability to express complex ideas, educators and researchers mistakenly classed an entire social group as ignorant. Labov (1972) also challenged scholars who used the surface contradictions of AAE to justify their view that Blacks were innately less intelligent than whites, and noted the damage such views caused in the classroom, "There is no reason to believe that any non-standard vernacular is in itself an obstacle to learning. The chief problem is ignorance of language on the part of all concerned." (p.79). Labov's work is valuable because, as the first major work on Black speech to use sociolinguistic research, it serves as the foundation for research that has taken place since.

Another well-known study was Shirley Brice Heath's ethnographic study of the families living in three communities in the Piedmont Plateaus of the Carolinas. For nearly 10 years during the 1970's, Heath lived, worked, and played with the people of "Roadville" and "Trackton" and the neighboring middle class "townspeople." This unique, interpersonal

methodology afforded her incredible access as she explored the development and use of language in these communities, how they differed, and how these differences played out in schools where success and failure depend largely on the negotiation of language (Heath, 1983). Heath provides detailed descriptions of the daily lives and material conditions of the residents living in the two towns, Roadville and Trackton. She begins her description of each town by explaining the typical layout of the houses and detailing the decor and supplies found in the homes. Roadville emerges as a white working-class town in which the mill has been a primary organizing setting for both attitudes and practices in daily life, while Heath describes Trackton as a Black community occupying a space between "the town" and "the projects." (Heath, 1983). Heath dedicates a great deal of time to outlining not only the economic conditions of life in these two places, but to delineating the typical family structures as well.

Trackton and Roadville residents' lives are observed to have some similarities (relatively insular, financially tenuous, some shared responsibility for the community (particularly the children), but there are differences. First, the difference in racial composition of the two communities: the residents of Roadville express reservations about Blacks, several of them citing the movement of Black families into town as their reason for leaving; others directly or indirectly admitting their distrust of Black folks and their children. Next, most of the residents of Roadville seem to own their homes, while those who live in Trackton consider this community to be a temporary stop on their way to home ownership (Heath, 1983). The family structure is also different; in Trackton, the strongest family ties are between mothers and sons, and whereas both communities have a strict division of labor, Trackton women are held responsible for managing family affairs and keeping the community running. In

Roadville, close neighbors may assume responsibility for disciplining each other's' children, but in Trackton, children are welcomed and embraced by the community as a whole.

After comparing how children learn language in these two communities, Heath introduces the townspeople, middle class families who are the teachers, managers, business owners, and government officials in the area. From an early age, the townspeople engaged their children in full conversations, commonly with questions that encourage the children to critically engage with their environment. This differs greatly from the strategies in Roadville and Trackton. As one Trackton mother put it, "We don't talk to our chil'rn like you folks do. We don't ask 'em bout colors, names, n things" (Heath, 1983, p. 109). In contrast to Roadville and Trackton, the frequency and purposes for reading and writing among the townspeople were vast and varied. Children observe adults reading for pleasure, information, and future guidance (Heath, 1983). Writing is also present and varied in form, ranging from grocery lists and reminders to personal and business letters, reports, stories, and poems. Most importantly, as described in Heath's work, at early age townspeople children became acclimatized to retrieving, responding to, and talking about the information in written texts. For the townspeople's children, the ways of talking about written materials and asking and answering questions in school seem very "natural" because it is what they have grown up with. However, as Heath (1983) points out, "for the children of Trackton and Roadville, the townspeople's ways are far from natural and they seem strange indeed" (p. 262). Roadville students usually fare better than Trackton students in exhibiting "linguistic patterns equated with readiness for school" (Heath, 1983, p. 343). However, the challenges facing children from both communities consistently become prohibitive to sustained academic success.

Despite the different demographics of the two communities, Heath specifically chose not to focus upon race or class throughout her fieldwork, but this does not mean that *Ways with Words* lacks significance for the field of education. Heath's focus on language development highlights the ways that deep cultural differences affect children's access to information and learning in school. Heath shows that local language traditions and customs that begin in the home are carried into the classroom by students and teachers alike. In many cases, this transfer of linguistic structures and values is institutionalized so heavily that it impedes the academic success of students from language backgrounds that does not align with Standard English.

Similar to the scholarship that challenged racist perspectives and biological and cultural deficits, Labov and Heath encountered limitations in their research. Labov and Heath's work, while impactful to this day is criticized for essentializing and not acknowledging the complexities of Black culture. For Labov, his methods of collecting data from Black participants were critiqued (Gilyard, 1991). Though informative, his work did not delve deeper into the complex and intersectional identities that contributed to his participants' language use. In terms of Heath's work, her study of the Roadville and Trackton communities is a detailed look into the concepts of culture, language and community. However, if we are to learn from her work, it is imperative that we take a critical look at the content and implications of what she observed. Race was not fully taken up as a significant factor in the study; Heath is critiqued for not dealing with the racial implications and the institutional racism that were present in the communities.

Generally, many people including teachers measure academic ability based on the way a person speaks. Teachers could then develop low expectations of students and may treat them as low achieving students (Picher et al., 1978; Delpit, 2002). Additionally, there are studies about teachers' perceptions of AAE and educational outcomes of Black students. One teacher noted,

"When I'm in the classroom and I see who can't say 'this', and they say 'dis' and 'dis'. I just want to take them by the jaw and say 'can't you get it right?'" (Speicher 1992, p. 396). This teacher is frustrated that her students did not speak in Standard English in the classroom. The teacher only seems to have one idea of what is "right". Smitherman (1999) presents a teacher who "stated that she corrects her students' English when they use 'slang' when speaking directly to her in class time" (p. 108). This teacher does not acknowledge AAE as a real dialect. She uses the term slang, which does not represent all that AAE encompasses. In this last statement a teacher reports, "He'd say I be goin', and you know I had to stop him. Because he needed to learn how to speak proper, you know" (Souto-Manning, 2009, p.1084). This contributes to the idea of only one proper way to speak. All of the teachers in these cases automatically assume or have been taught that AAE is a degradation of Standard English. More often than not, the teachers are sincere and want help their students. Most teachers ultimately want what is best for their students, but that does not change the fact that good intentions are simply not enough to solve that problem at hand (Delpit 2002). Their belief of only one proper way of speaking shows how language ideologies are embedded into schools and society. The teachers feel like their AAE speaking students are not learning how to speak properly, but what is the proper way to speak? And who sets these rules?

Moreover, teachers' perceptions of AAE do have an impact on how students view themselves and their teachers. The following is an example of an AAE speaking student's perception of her teacher, "Mrs._____ always be interrupting to make you 'talk correct' and stuff. She be butting into our conversations when you not even talking to her! She need to mind her own business" (Delpit, 1995, p.50). The student reacted negatively to her teacher constantly correcting her. This kind of teacher-student interaction is not healthy for the student's learning

environment. It also reinforces the belief that one has to speak one dialect and that they cannot have multiple linguistic repertoires. In these instances, teachers are enforcing the belief that Standard English is more valuable than AAE. As stated earlier, language is a part identity and if teachers tell students their language is wrong, what are you telling them about their identity? These interactions index to the students that their identity is wrong (Delpit, 2002).

These previously discussed attitudes are the cause of many problems for Black students in the classroom. In response to schools' perceptions of AAE, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), a subsection of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) issued a statement that pertained to language to be applied in K-12 and college spaces. The statement said (1974):

> We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a Standard American dialect has any validity. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language (as cited in Smitherman, 1999, p. 254).

This statement publically acknowledges the language diversity many students in the U.S. education system acquire and that these languages do not always align with Standard English. Statements such as SRTOL challenge our linguistic norms paved the way for pedagogical and curriculum actions to be taken by Black communities who believe their students were not receiving a quality education. Problems still exist for AAE speakers inside and outside the classroom. One of those problems is that language arts and writing teachers do not know what to do with the language variation students bring to the classroom. A major limitation of SRTOL is that there are no concrete pedagogical practices to go along with the resolution. Many of the materials that were developed were never published. According to Smitherman (2003), it was

due to the conservative political climate of the 1980s and 1990s and the revitalization of English only movements. The extent of the students' rights is limited to using non-standard language variations in their local communities, for informal purposes and low-stakes writing needs in the classroom, not for "formal" purposes. Additionally, NCTE never passed a similar resolution besides the meager statement of all dialects are effective forms of communication, but students need to learn the writing conventions of Standard English (Smitherman, 2003). SRTOL is a dichotomized simplified solution, which reinforces the devaluing of other languages and dialects. This begs the question of whether SROTL is being applied to everyday practices.

AAE, Literacy and Composition in College Settings

In 1806, Harvard College established the Boylston Professorship of Rhetoric and Oratory and subsequently became the dominant influence on the development of rhetoric at other American colleges. English composition was a played large role in Harvard's 1874 entrance exams which required each applicant write an essay with "correct" grammar, spelling and punctuation and focused on classic works ranging from Julius Caesar to Shakespeare (Douglas, 1976). Over time, the Harvard model of freshman composition began to spread. The curriculum of composition started to influence secondary schools one needed to know the listed works to perform well on admissions tests at prestigious colleges (Douglas, 1976; Stewart, 1985). The prestige of these colleges that regulated their admissions according to the lists made it hard for other colleges to avoid mandating similar requirements.

By the early twentieth century, high school and colleges teachers started to resent the nuisance of college admission standards on teaching. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) was formed in 1911 largely to establish resistance to these admission standards and to

represent other conceptions of English studies. NCTE was the beginning to rethinking the teaching of writing in terms of self-expression and social purposes. At the same time, departments of speech and English were growing at American institutions and influenced by the progressive reform movement, which directly challenged the idea that the goal of higher education in America should be to empower elite classes (Russell, 1992). Progressives believed that the purpose of education is to integrate a diverse population into a community of productive citizens. Progressive education sought to teach students the intellectual and social skills they would need as "productive citizens" and give attention to the needs of individual students. Though these fields were progressing, "correctness" remained a goal of writing instruction. Progressives still defended the argument that "correctness" would be useful in the workforce, beyond school (Russell, 1992). One of the main aspects of progressive education, specifically writing, was to assimilate diverse groups into American society. As the study of composition developed further, teachers and scholars started to recognize the need to restructure the freshman writing course. NCTE mandated the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 1949. In the 1950s, the CCCC produced scholarship that laid foundations for the modern discipline of composition studies.

The Emergence of Basic Writer Ideologies

Progressive educators before World War II had urged researchers to use methods that could actually investigate the needs of students, but this was rarely taken into consideration within the study of composition. In the 1970s, empirical studies based on observations of writers began (i.e. Nancy Sommers (1980) and Sondra Perl (1994)). These empirical studies supported the arguments that there is more than one writing process. Furthermore, the process was not

presented as being neatly linear, as described in the classical model, but appeared to be recursive (Sommers, 1980) and hierarchical, as developed in the model of Linda Flower et.al (1986).

As previously discussed in chapter one and earlier in this literature review, when the number of college freshmen whose language and rhetorical practices did not completely align with Standard English increased, this tested previous notions about writers. The work of William Labov and other sociolinguists on dialectal variation helped writing teachers see that this new classroom population were beginners in the genre of academic writing and not cognitively, socially or culturally deficit, but linguistically and culturally diverse. An outcome of this realization was the 1974 resolution by the CCCC on students' right to their own languages.

When studies about cultural, rhetorical and linguistic diversity rose, studies about basic writing explored the pedagogical problems posed by dialectal variation in the classroom. Mina Shaughnessy's work, *Errors and Expectations* (1977) argues for respect for students' home languages but also advises teachers on how to help these students become more comfortable with academic writing. Many student errors with standard forms are actually rule-governed ways of writing and speaking. According to Shaughnessy, the study of "error" must consider students' cultural background and how this may affect their relation to the social contexts of school as well as what appears on the page when they write. Gunner (1998) complicates this notion by discussing the false dichotomy and ahistorical approach that underlies Shaughnessy's idea of basic writers. This discussion helps to understand the nature of the conflicts in the field of basic writing. Two primary discourses, iconic and critical, have shaped discussions about basic writing. Iconic discourse reproduces notions of writing according to traditional rules about writing, while critical discourse is transgressive. Iconic discourse does not allow writers to

conceptualize rhetoric and writing without betraying and dehistoricizing non-academic/standard language practices and limits the discourse possibilities of students.

Min-Zhan Lu (1994) pushes forward the argument that the real goal of basic writers is not to assimilate, or completely throw out academic discourse, even when it is monolithic. The goal is to create innovative discursive strategies for negotiating the boundaries that are set for them within writing classrooms. Basic writers are complex and cannot be essentialized. Therefore, institutions must adjust to these students' new discursive forms.

The Challenge of Language and Rhetorical Variation

In the 1980s, composition scholars focused on the social nature of writing, building upon previous work in both basic writing and writing across the curriculum. The search for a social theory of writing became broadly interdisciplinary. Composition scholars studied not only writing but all aspects of language use. They regarded this as actually creating knowledge, not merely disseminating it. These interests have been shared with scholars from the fields of history, linguistics, literary criticism, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and speech communication. Scholars in all these fields sought an account of discourses that acknowledges the power of rhetoric to help create a community's worldview, knowledge, and interpretive practices.

The themes of the 1980, social construction, politics, literacy, and gender issues, extended in the 1990s to work that related composition studies to postmodernism and cultural studies. Social construction was widely accepted as a theoretical basis for understanding language use. In response to the growing cultural diversity of student populations, composition had its first

longitudinal studies about college writers. Mary Louise Pratt (1991) called upon educators to think of the curriculum and the classroom as "contact zones" in which cultural groups of unequal power can interact under conditions that enable sharing and understanding. Marilyn Sternglass's *Time to Know Them* (1997) follows nine City College students through their academic career, but at the same time, composition also now has its first critique of process pedagogy. Lisa Delpit (1995) criticizes the writing process movement for its tendency to restrict minority students' access to linguistic codes. Composition teachers and scholars were quick to respond to Pratt's challenge in ways that confirmed the richness of the contact zone metaphor and its potential for pedagogy. For example, A. Suresh Canagarajah (1997) finds the concept of "safe houses" to be important for his students, but Joseph Harris finds it problematic if those "houses" serve only as retreats where differences are not negotiated. Additionally, Harris (1995) critiques Pratt for importing difference into her classroom (through her choices of class readings) but does not actually engage with the differences among students or offer strategies for students to communicate about and across differences. Harris ultimately argues that Pratt's conceptualization of the contact zone is problematic because of the superficiality of the engagement with otherness. When students retreat to "safe houses" difference is acknowledged but the conflict remains. Work on how differences get negotiated allows for more possibilities of creating a more expansive view of intellectual life in college spaces.

Ways think about the approaching the diversity of classrooms is to look to Gloria Anzaldúa's "borderlands" (*la frontera*), places of cultural, spiritual, geographical, and linguistic difference, where the incentive for discomfort and conflict is a fulfilling sense for the shift and multiplicity of identities. Along with Pratt's contact zones, Anzaldúa's borderlands give teachers and writers more ways to think about the space of the classroom and the curriculum, but more important, her

"*mestiza* rhetoric" invites writers to blend genres, to occupy multiple identities, and to refuse to enclose discourses within well-defined parameters. Such border or space crossing occurs in the studying of literacy in spaces outside of the classroom. Beverly Moss's collection *Literacy across Communities* and Brian Street's collection *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Literacy* extend the work of Labov and Heath in sociolinguistic and anthropological studies of literacy outside the academy. The intention behind this work was to help composition teachers understand the cultural histories and languages from where our students increasingly come. With a growing recognition that literacy does not mean school literacy, Deborah Brandt, among others, focus on reading, writing, and communicative practices that exist outside and alongside classroom spaces.

AAE in College Space: In Composition and Beyond

When AAE speakers move to into college spaces, the problems they faced in K-12 spaces remain. In higher education, there is limited research that focuses on the language experiences of students, especially AAE speaking students (Orepeza et. al., 2010). A majority of the higher education language and literacy research comes from the field of Writing Studies or Rhetoric and Composition Studies (see Kynard, 2013; Prendergast, 2003, Gilyard, 1999). In the last few decades, critical discourse on race in composition studies has emerged. This discourse does not necessarily embrace multiculturalism, but it does try to confront institutionalized racism through analyzing discourses, and practices. For instance, Wallace and Bell's (1999) study shows how Black students resisted the label of "success stories", which forced the researchers to rethink how to tell these stories without being reductive or essentialist and without reproducing the dominant culture. Keith Gilyard's, *Race, Rhetoric, and Composition*, work Catherine Prendergast (1998)

and David Wallace and Annissa Bell (1999) interrogate constructions of race in composition spaces.

Work that specifically deals with AAE found for instance that the majority of speaking college students, which Speicher (1999) surveyed, reported to have a negative view of AAE. This study gives insight on the powerful influence that language ideologies can have on the AAE speakers' perceptions of language. Even among AAE speakers, Standard English hegemony is prevalent in practice. Haddix's (2007) work focuses on the racial and linguistic experiences of Black female pre-service teachers and how they see themselves in and out of the context of traditional teacher education programs. Participants in the study often experienced racism and often felt uncomfortable and alienated in the classroom with their white peers. The participants used AAE in different ways to cope with their negative classroom experiences. It was a way to affirm the realities of their experiences. Also, it was used as a counter-language to talk about their experiences in a way that challenged the dominant stories. AAE can be used as a powerful tool to counteract monolingual dominant stories.

On a different note, Oropeza et. al.'s (2010) work looks at the perspectives of English Language Learners (ELL) in college settings. Many linguistic minority students are not accurately labeled and the labels attributed to them have typically failed to capture the complexity of their identities. These labels are problematic because they carry negative connotations about the students which can affect educational opportunities. Oropeza et. al. uses Yosso's theory of community cultural wealth to understand the ways linguistic minority students navigate both the labels and statues that educational institutions assign to them. By bringing linguistic minority students to the front of the discourse, Oropeza et. al. show how ELL college

students used their community cultural wealth and different forms of capital to access and navigate college while experiencing differing advantages and disadvantages based on institutional labeling.

By employing critical race theory and its conceptualization of capital, Oropeza et. al. ultimately shows how students use, resist, and negotiate labels in an attempt to access resources and services at a four-year institution. This research challenges institutions to implement practices and policies that reflect the richness of linguistic minority student identities. While not having the "benefits" of being native English speakers, linguistic capital can be used to disrupt the institutional labels that were placed on them, and it also helped the students successfully navigate through a barrier ridden space. It is important acknowledge that linguistic minorities do not have deficits; they have capital. Though Oropeza et. al. research focused on Spanish speakers, these ideas can be applied to understand the challenges that AAE speakers also face in college settings and how they mitigate them.

The lack of acknowledgement that linguistic minorities, in my case AAE speakers, are valuable is a major issue in college classrooms. For years, there were and (still are) assumptions that Black communities do not care about literacy and do not have legitimate rhetorical and language practices. Scholars such as Fisher, Ball, Kynard and Richardson have challenged these notions. For instance, Richardson (2003) provides a historical and contemporary analysis of African American language and literacies. Richardson defines literacies for Black communities as "the ability to accurately read their experiences of being in the world with others and to act on this knowledge in a manner beneficial for the self-preservation, economic, spiritual, and cultural uplift. African American literacies are ways of knowing and being in the world with others" (Richardson 2003, p.35). To show this, Richardson draws upon sociolinguistics, African

American Studies, Rhetoric and Composition, and critical race theory to develop a theory and pedagogy of African American literacies that address both the discourse forms and functions as well as what it means to teach and learn within these discourse practices. African American literacies arise from a tradition of negotiating vernacular and standard epistemologies and ontologies. Richardson develops her argument around an example of signifying in African American literary traditions and the freedom through literacy metaphors. Richardson points out how literacies (both empowering and oppressive varieties) were used by Africans and African Americans during African enslavement, through reconstruction, post-reconstruction, the Harlem Renaissance, civil rights and Black power movements, and Hip-hop consciousnesses are connected through a common history and struggle.

Fisher (2009) goes further by discussing the development of spaces where Black literacy practices flourish. Identifying writers, poets, organizers, activists, and teachers among those who organized these spaces, Fisher focuses on the diversity of their lived experiences and professional training. As a result, she avoids constructing essentialized representations of spaces in which Black literacy practices can be nurtured. She does, however, suggest that the communities held several things in common: the belief in the power of words to transform individuals and communities; understanding of the relationship between literacy and power; commitment to community empowerment and the inclusion of community voices. Fisher disrupts the stereotypes about the value that Black Americans ascribe to literacy, identifying practices that could have significant implications for teaching and learning.

When most students enter college, they are required to take some form of a college writing course. While the courses vary across university campuses, one thing remains the same, many teachers, writing instructors included, have limited understandings of literacy practices

outside of the domain of Standard English (Horner and Lu, 1999; Jackson and Richardson, 2003). When one language and rhetoric is accepted as the being the best, what place do other languages and dialects have? It is important to understand how language plays in a role in the academic "successes" or "failures" in higher education, especially in writing. In many cases, when students come with linguistic and writing practices that exist outside the realm of Standard English, they are categorized as basic writers, placed in "remedial" courses or perceived as not having the ability to become effective writers. As mentioned earlier, basic writing has been constructed as a deficit model, where writers are categorized as not writing with an intentional purpose, being content with an initial draft and being prone to superficial revision. Basic writers were usually Black, Latinx or poor white rural students (Horner and Lu, 1999), but the notion of the basic writer has been challenged by scholars. Royster and Williams (1999) critiqued that composition studies lack student centered studies. From Royster and Williams' perspective, many narratives refer to a particular student who is a struggling basic writer and successful writers are not included. They also argue that the conflation of race and basic writers has become embedded within composition scholarship. Royster and Williams then point out specific examples of where the conflations are present.

Helmer's *Writing Students: Compositional Testimonials and Representations of Students* (1994) were critiqued because it does not address the various social identities of students, specifically in regard to gender or ethnic backgrounds of the students, and this contributes to constructing a generalized student. Balester's *Cultural Divide: A Study of African American College-Level Writers* (1992) discusses successful students who incorporate Black English Vernacular (AAE) in productive ways but positioned them as outsiders and "basic writers", which has negative connotations. Also, Balester's work did not fully account for the intersections

of race, class, gender and other social identities. According to Royster and Williams, Balester's work demonstrates the conflation of race and basic writing (Royster and Williams, 1999). Lastly, Royster and Williams focus on Shaughnessy's *Errors and expectations* (1977). In the conception of basic writers, Shaughnessy does not discuss the social category of race in her work; instead she argues that the continued oppression of Black students is due to Black students' tendencies to develop negative perceptions of language (Royster & Williams, 1999). After pointing out these gaps and limitations in scholarly historical accounts of composition studies, Royster and Williams focus on understanding discussions about race in academia and composition studies.

The study of rhetorical traditions is present in the composition studies and there is an increasing call for more recognition of Black literacy, language and rhetorical traditions in student writing (Gilyard, 1999). While scholars have recognized the issues that arise when AAE speakers are present in composition classrooms they have not fully explored the students' understandings of their positon in composition spaces. Research has documented the challenges that arise when researching students from different linguistic and rhetorical backgrounds, but how do we start to revise pedagogical practices that further marginalize certain students? While composition studies may have its shortcomings, the field did strive to at least formally acknowledge language variations with the SRTOL statement. However, it seems regardless of the movements made to improve the schooling environments for AAE speakers, we still fall short of effective and equitable practices. Why are schools (both K-12 and postsecondary) still struggling with the linguistic repertoires and literacies of Black students?

Our conceptions of language must change in order to produce pedagogy and programs that are effective for AAE speaking students. History has shown that if we do not understand and challenge the power dynamics behind language, inequities will continue to plague our societies

and schools. As it stated before, the conception of Standard English prevents us from seeing the legitimacy of AAE. So even if Black students speak Standard English, it does not guarantee that they will be successful in classrooms and larger contexts. Hudley and Mallison (2010) state "African Americans who speak Standardized English still might be passed over for a job simply because they are African American" (p.78), which implies that deeper attitudes about Black communities exist in the controversy and debate around AAE in institutions. As we can see, the socio-historical constructions of race have an impact on the lives of Black people. Black bodies have been categorized and defined in a variety of different ways. When it comes to language, that impact is no different. Since language is a part of one's identity, who we are affects people's perceptions of the language. Therefore, the stigma of being Black in the U.S. also implies a stigma of our language use (Smitherman and Alim, 2012). Racist ideologies are also present in scholarship about the Black Americans' language and literacy practices. It is no surprise that much of the scholarship about Black language was centered in linguistically and culturally deficit theories. These theories hold on to the myth that certain linguistic varieties are inherently superior and that children who are raised in environments where such varieties are not present will acquire deficient modes of thought, resulting in deficits which will have to be corrected in order for them to be able to participate fully in society (Smitherman, 1977).

We can see that across fields of scholarship race theory is underutilized. Many scholars do not address the complexities of race, in this case blackness, and all of its intersections. When we do not, we cannot understand the full implications of our research.

My study is a conversation with the research I reviewed in this chapter. This project investigates AAE students' perceptions of their place in higher education spaces by incorporating critical race theory and communicative competence to critique the larger institutional roles that

are influential to AAE students' experiences in the space. My project is an attempt to contribute to the conversation a theoretical framework that can fully encompass both the racial and linguistic inequities that are present within higher education systems. In the next chapter, I will describe the theoretical framework, design and methods I used to conduct my research.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Research Design

The ultimate goal of my research study is to investigate students' navigation of higher education institutions through their linguistic and writing practices and how they understand them. The goal of this chapter is to understand the theoretical frameworks that I borrow from to guide this study and review the methods that I used to answer my research questions, which I restate below:

1. What is AAE speaking students' understanding of the larger discourses about Black students in PWI contexts?
    a. How do AAE students' experiences contribute to the larger discourses about Black students in an institutional context?
2. What are AAE speakers' meta-pragmatic discourses (self-awareness) about their linguistic practices and repertories in school (K-12 and postsecondary) settings?
3. How do the AAE speakers' actual language practice(s) compare to their perceived language practices?
4. What language related experiences become salient or emerge in students' narratives about interactions in various campus spaces (i.e. classrooms, casual social interactions, extracurricular organizations)?
        i. a. How do students' writing experiences in college classrooms contribute to their perceptions of their linguistic and writing abilities?

Theoretical Framework(s)

First, I want to acknowledge that I am not suggesting that sociolinguists or composition scholars have not thought critically about issues of hegemony and power. Many theorists and sociolinguists such as Gal, Woolard and Bourdieu have taken up questions of language

ideologies and power, but they do not directly discuss the unique aspects that race work brings to language work. Additionally, I am not implying that researchers have not taken race up as a factor in language variation. Smitherman, Delpit, Uriolici, Alim and several others connect race and language and discuss the racialization of language. While they discuss the outcomes of how race affects the perceptions of language practices, they do not deeply theorize the social, cultural and historical role that race has played in language and furthermore how college students understand this racialization.

The United States has a history of racism and discrimination towards Black people, especially in institutions such as schools (Hudley & Mallinson, 2010). One of the ways racism manifests is through language ideologies. Schools often promote and reinforce a monoglot ideology which "makes time and space static, it suggests a transcendent phenomenology for things that define the nation state, and presents them as natural, neutral, a-contextual and non-dynamic: as facts of nature" (Blommaert, 2010, p.165) rather than the "densely mixed, polyglot repertoires" (p.166) that actually reflect people's lives, and "in particular disrupted lives during periods of immense upheaval" (p.166) are important to acknowledge. Race implies differential access to power and spaces; language comes to represent a battle over resources. Discourses about AAE must consider the complex racial relations that are involved. The racism that Black people face also applies to the language they speak. James Baldwin once said, "It is not the Black child's language which is despised, it is his experience and his body" (As cited in Hill, 2000, p.451). The conception of Standard English and AAE is deeper than just the spoken word; it is also about who speaks the words. Because racism is institutionalized through language, AAE is stigmatized because Black people have created and used it (Hill, 2000). In the documentary, *American Tongues,* Wolfram mentioned, "It's easy to figure out which dialects is more desirable

and which dialects are less desirable- just look at which groups are more desirable and which groups are less desirable" (Wolfram As cited in Ball & Alim, 2006, p.114). Perceptions of language are tied to sociocultural perceptions of identity, so if you belong to a stigmatized social group your language practices will carry the same stigma. Urciuoli's work (1996) is an example of the racialization of language. She notes "racialized people are considered out of place, they are dirty, they are dangerous and unwilling or unable to participate constructively in the nation" (Uriciuoli, 1996, p.50). Language differences are often racialized by inability to speak English, English with an accent, or a different dialect and this marks someone as disorderly and unlikely to experience social mobility (Ahearn, 2012; Uriciuoli, 1996). Language has been used to develop and reinforce particular power relations and management of language as a way to manage the bodies who speak the language. Blommaert (2010) argues for a sociolinguistics that considers and observes both language users and language varieties as historical entities, and regard linguistic communities as emergent ones, shaped and reshaped by the constant interaction of their members. When language moves between different spaces it draws upon the local histories of the space. The spaces always belong to another, and they are filled with norms, expectations and conceptions of what counts as "proper" and "normal" language use. Linguistic mobility is a path through different stratified, controlled and monitored spaces in which language gives you away (Blommaert, 2010). When thinking about power, we must consider the intersections of our social identities because it will provide a truer understanding of how the structures of white supremacy are working (Cohen, 1999). Race and language cannot be separated, they are bound. In order to study race and language in an effective way, what frameworks will put race in the forefront, while still addressing AAE language practices and

experiences? I propose the use of two theoretical frameworks: Critical Race Theory and Ethnography of Communication.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a way of looking at race relations, particularly within the United States (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). The theory recognizes that racism is permanent and is engrained into the fabric and systems of U.S. society (Bell, 1992). The theory developed when scholars, such as Derrick Bell, in the legal profession began to worry about the slow rate at which laws were changing to promote racial equity. These legal professionals also worried that many of the early victories of the Civil Rights Movement were already declining. Examining everyday interactions, and finding the racial components in them, can help propel the racial equality movement forward (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). When using CRT, it is important to acknowledge that race, history, and voice are key components to understanding racism in the United States (Zamudio et al., 2011). The four main tenants to CRT are as follows: interest convergence, counter-storytelling, permanence of racism and whiteness as property.

In terms of education, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued that CRT can be used as a theoretical framework to talk about the inequalities that marginalized populations face. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to the field of education because race was underutilized as a theoretical framework for understanding educational inequality among racially and ethnically under-represented groups. They theorize race and use it as an analytic tool for understanding inequity in schools. CRT manifests in education in many different ways and Ladson-Billings and Tate provide several examples of how CRT can be of great use in education. It provides a lens for looking critically at the practices that marginalize students based on race, culture, gender, class, or sexuality. For the context of this study, language will also be added to that list.

Traditionally, AAE speakers have been silenced in educational settings and CRT will be useful in providing insights into the everyday realities and lived experiences of the silenced. For instance, what is considered as property in education varies from physical property (textbooks, school buildings) to intellectual property (curriculum). Notions of property account for the power relations and inequities present when we think about what whiteness allows students to do in school spaces. It involves both the right to exclude and the right not to be excluded. Whiteness is a "resource deployable at the social, political, and institutional level to maintain control." (Harris, 1993, p.1734). Whiteness becomes a privilege that is protected and usable similar to tangible property. Who has the rights to property as it relates to education? Ladson-Billings and Tate connect Harris' theory of whiteness as property to education through "the property functions of whiteness".

Dixson and Rousseau (2006) focus on research about the use of CRT in education since Ladson-Billings and Tate introduced CRT to the field in 1995. They go over the main aspects of CRT (voice, restrictive v. expansive, the problem with colorblindness) and how these aspects have been used over the years to address inequality in education. Dixson and Rousseau also address the critiques that some scholars have of CRT particularly with storytelling and racial realism, but those critiques are countered with real examples of how these tenants are useful. Though the authors offer a critique of their own, Dixson and Rousseau also write about a need in education for solutions that address racial inequity. It is important to note Dixson and Rousseau emphasize one cannot fully understand and apply CRT in education until they understand the foundation of CRT in the legal field. Like anything, it is imperative to know CRT in context to use it effectively.

The power of narrative is shown through Dixson and Rousseau's The *First Day of School: A CRT Story*. The CRT story has many CRT moments. Even though the school superintendent attempted to provide equal opportunities for the Black and Latino schools, the white schools still managed to find a way get more resources because it did not benefit them to have equal resources (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). It is not only an example of interest convergence, but also a restrictive view of equality. The restrictive actions create the illusion that these laws, policies and practices are actually providing an equal playing field for marginalized students, but in reality, it is masking and at times reinforces the dominant story.

Within language, the dominant stories revolve around standard languages. Language standardization are practices that operates as a convert system, which can reveal racist ideologies and systematic practices. Usually the linguistic norms of the ones in power are indexed as the standard or official language. Alim and Smitherman (2012) would argue:

> In our case, White Mainstream English and white ways of speaking become the invisible or better inaudible of what educators and uncritical scholars like to call academic English, the language of the school, the language of power, or communicating in academic spaces" (p.171).

Language research has shown how instrumental social context is to understanding how humans use language. Sociolinguists have made the effort to go beyond the limits of their research institutions to real social settings in order to gather data on language as people use it in everyday life. According to Hymes:

> It will not do to begin with language or a Standard linguistic description, and look outward to social context. A crucial characteristic of the sociolinguistic approach is that it looks in toward language, as it were, from its social matrix (As cited in Blommaert, 2010, p.2).

Hymes proposed we should study the knowledge people have when they communicate. According to Chomsky, linguistic theory is primarily about the language of an ideal speaker-hearer, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows the language perfectly and

is unaffected by grammatically irrelevant conditions, such as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention, interest, and errors. This brought up many questions like: does an ideal speaker-hearer exist? Is there a homogeneous speech community? To expand on Chomsky, Hymes proposes a theory of language performance. This theory pursues the social knowledge that underlies linguistic performance, which Hymes calls communicative competence (Hymes, 1971). Hymes moves to elaborate and further develop linguistic competence by proposing "ways of speaking" (Hymes, 1989) which goes beyond language as grammar, an abstracted set of rules or norms. Under ways of speaking, Hymes offers a two-part conception of speech that incorporates both the registers available to speakers, and capital that these speakers' language carries. Thus, Hymes offers a theoretical basis for language study that accounts for both linguistic variations from individual to individual and relative linguistic coherence across the social space and scales, while also offering a methodological empirical way to study communication.

This understanding of language is important because it equally foregrounds two aspects of speaking that Hymes argues cannot be separated: what speakers can and do say, and the communal context such speech occurs in. Speech does not occur in a vacuum, but rather within a specific social context, and "when the meaning of speech styles is analyzed, we realize that they entail dimensions of participant, setting, channel, and the like, which partly govern their meanings" (Hymes, 1989, p. 444). For Hymes, speech cannot be separated from sociological and cultural factors (I would insert that race cannot also be separated from speech) that help shape linguistic form and create meaning. The frame he offers in place of grammar gives equal space to both aspects of speech: speech and the factors that give meaning to speech. Thus, Hymes is adamant that any terminology adopted must treat both aspects of speech equally, neglecting both

"speech styles and their contexts" and "means of speech and their meanings" is insufficient for fully understand language (p. 446). Hymes points out that context and meaning fail to evoke the norms of interaction that go beyond. In other words, linguistic competence tells you whether a sentence is grammatical or not, communicative competence tells you whether an utterance is appropriate or not within a particular situation (Hymes, 1971). The social constructs inform the language practices of the speakers.

From the linguistic perspective, no language or dialect is of higher or lower value, so using terms like "proper English," "good grammar" or even "Standard English" is socially constructed (Delpit, 2002; Smitherman & Alim, 2012; Ahern 2012). Essentially, ethnography of communication focuses on how the speakers of a language in particular communities are able to communicate with each other in a manner that is not only linguistically correct, but also appropriate for the sociocultural context. This ability consists of shared knowledge of the linguistic code as well as the socio-cultural rules, norms and values which creates the social context. Ethnography of communication is concerned with questions about a person's linguistic repertoires in various spaces and their language socialization.

The issue with ethnography of communication is that social context relates to the setting where the language shifts are taking place, but it does not fully consider that movement across space is never a move across an empty space. Furthermore, ethnography of communication does not contend with who occupies these spaces and who gets to determine the type of communication and socio-cultural rules allowed in these spaces. While CRT operates to show the permanent presence of racism in societies of the U.S., ethnography of communication does not include race as an essential aspect of the socio- cultural context. Ethnography of communication is a foundational aspect of any sociolinguistic-based study. The insistence on the

rich, social context of reality allows sociolinguistic research to be applied to real-world problems and can attempt to address the inequity linguistic minorities experience in educational spaces. Ethnography of communication places the emphasis on the speech communities to describe their language based on their norms and not the researchers. CRT and ethnography of communication have this emphasis in common. CRT has often been a way to critically look at the how racism is embedded into our world, but it looks to the bottom. Mari Matsuda's idea of "looking to the bottom" reflects the basic foundation of CRT and it consists of "adopting the perspective of those who have seen and felt the falsity of the liberal promise" (Matsuda, 1987, p.324). An essential tenant to CRT is counter-storytelling acknowledging that the mainstream stories exclude the voices of the marginalized.

Therefore, ethnography of communication is important to understand when thinking about language shifts and repertoires, but CRT is helpful in understanding the convert practices and ideologies that reinforce white supremacy-based values. Overall, there is limited empirical research about language framed within CRT. While AAE itself and its impact in education is a well-studied and documented phenomenon, there have been few effective pedagogical and institutional implementations. AAE speakers are still navigating institutional spaces that fail to recognize the value and legitimacy of AAE. Moreover, there is a need for CRT scholars to discuss the role that AAE plays in the larger scheme of inequity, racism and education.

Heath et al. (2008) observe that researchers who study language and culture face special difficulties, "they have to figure out how human beings coordinate with the regularities in the patterns of symbolic structure" (p. 2) and what happens when we look at language practices and ideologies through within a framework of race, it becomes even more complicated. Black people are a marginalized population who are vulnerable, especially in educational spaces. As a speaker

of AAE, I understand the risks students, who are speakers of AAE, face in institutions that do not acknowledge or value their culture. Conducting research in a hostile space can be counterproductive if researchers do not understand the risks and utilize frameworks that value Black bodies. Others' constructions of race and blackness influence how the marginalized see themselves. Scholars who study race and racism bring their experiences and socializations to the research they conduct in addition to their academic training. The very institutions where we are trained also uphold oppressive social structures, which can create conflicts (Ferguson, 2102; Marquez & Rana, 2015). These institutions have not only perpetuated racist ideologies but have funded unethical research practices. Keeping this in mind, how do we resist and challenge the structures that are intricately tied to our lives?

Therefore, I propose the combination of ethnography of communication and CRT, Racial communicative competence. Racial communicative competence (RCC) relies on the ideologies of race theory, specifically CRT to understand institutional practices and policies. In addition to exposing these practices and policies, RCC informs the strategies of speakers and writers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds when operating in white supremacy embedded spaces. For the purposes of this study I focus on how Black AAE speakers embody these notions.

Site Selection

The study was conducted at a large predominantly white university (PWI) located in the Midwest region of the United States. The university has approximately 44,605 total students: 31,932 undergraduates and 10,673 graduate and professional students. The demographics are as follows: gender: 54% men, 46% women; race/ethnicity: 45% white, 5.0% African-American, 8.0% Latino/a, 14.0% Asian-American, 0.08% Native American, 2% Multiracial. 22.3 % of the student body are labeled as international (Midwest University, 2015). As we can see from the

demographic statistics, excluding international student populations, students of color make up a small portion of the student population. The reason for these demographics goes back to the point that PWIs were not spaces created to serve students of color. Specifically, Black/African-American populations were denied access to the institution and other higher education spaces. Since the 1960s, the height of the civil rights movement and Black Power Movements, there has been a push to diversify the campus through university initiatives, such as Project 500, 100 Strong, and Project 1000 (Williamson, 1999).

When Black students entered higher education spaces, particularly at this Midwestern institution, they were often met with hostility from staff and faculty and experienced feelings of alienation and loneliness. One of the ways the university attempted to address these concerns was by forming Black student organizations, which served a supportive role for Black students (Williamson, 1999). Students demanded an end to university end discriminatory practices that violated federal policies. To some extent the administration listened, and an affirmative action program called SEOP (Project 500) was developed. While SEOP (and others like it around the country) addressed some of the concerns of students, there are still many barriers to equitable education. Specifically, the areas of academic support for multi-lingual; multi-dialectal students have been limited or non-existent. Furthermore, many composition/writing instructors have little knowledge about how to address the rhetorical skills of students from multi-lingual backgrounds, especially AAE speakers. Due to this lack of resources/teachings about linguistic and racial diversity, it is important to attempt to understand the complex ways that AAE speakers navigate higher education spaces, which is the main reason why I chose this institution.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the other main reason I chose this school as my site. While my interest in language has been long-standing, this space exposed me to Black

college students' experiences with writing and language use within campus spaces. Additionally, I have extensive knowledge about the space and have built rapport with not only students but offices, departments and programs on campus that I referred to in chapter one. This knowledge gave me access to space in ways that I would not have had if I was a stranger to this particular collegiate space.

Within the institution, there are hundreds of classes that require writing. All students fulfill a composition one requirement as part of their general education to develop collegiate academic writing skills. The university currently offers four main options to complete this requirement:

- RHET 101-102 "Principles of writing and principles of research" is a two-semester course that offers "Instruction in structuring academic, argumentative essays, including how to develop thesis statements and use evidence across different types of writing." (Midwestern University, 2017).
- RHET 105 "Writing and Research" is an "Introduction in research-based writing and the construction of academic, argumentative essays that use primary and secondary sources as evidence." (Midwestern University, 2017).
- ESL 111-112 "Intro to Academic Writing", a two-semester course that is designed to introduce international students to "the process of writing fundamentals of paragraph development: analysis of rhetorical patterns: development of oral skills." (Midwestern University, 2017).
- CMN 111-112 "Oral and Written Communication" is a two-semester course that teaches "Principles and practice in communication; stress on fundamentals of critical thinking in writing and speaking." (Midwestern University, 2017).

Both RHET (English) and ESL departments place students in a certain composition course based on students' ACT English Score and/or the English Placement Test. If the ACT English score is below 20, the student is placed in a RHET 101-102 course segment. RHET 101-102 is generally considered a "remedial" writing course. Students who have scored a 20 or above are automatically placed in the RHET 105 courses. ESL placement depends on the English placement Test (EPT) score. CMN 111-112 is a unique course that combines the requirements of composition one and public speaking in a yearlong course. CMN 111-112 does not have prerequisites such as a certain ACT or EPT test score and students may choose this option in lieu of taking the RHET or ESL courses. For classroom observations and participant recruitment, I chose to use the course of CMN 111-112. I have outlined following reasons below:

- I taught sections of this course for two years, so I am familiar with the curriculum and the objectives of the class and have a relationship with the course director.
- The class focuses on both the development of writing and speaking skills.
- While students are required to take a composition one course, the students who take the CMN 111-112 courses chose to take this course and were not simply placed in it.
- Curriculum is designed with a critical social opponent in the form of current events activities and assignments.

I would like to add that I have consciously refrained from writing more explicit details about the composition one courses (i.e. specific syllabi, course content or elaboration of teacher training) for multiple reasons. The main reason is that teachers' pedagogical practices or curriculum building often overshadow students' experiences and their perspectives about the class. This study is about student voices and not about the composition class itself or the instructors who teach it. Additionally, I argue that this would only perpetuate the scholarship that I critiqued in

chapter two and deviate from the goal of my project. To fully encompass student voices, I (again) call on Matsuda's argument to look to the bottom to start to understand how students navigate college spaces. Also, I omit this information to maintain the anonymity of my participants and the classes I was graciously allowed to observe.

Participant Selection

I recruited participants through two spaces: CMN 111/112 courses and an equity-based university program, one I previously worked for, that serves underrepresented college students. The recruitment through CMN 111 started with a conversation between the course director and me. After explaining my project, I requested permission to ask the other CMN 111 instructors if I could visit their class sections and the course director gratefully agreed. After I was given permission, I addressed the CMN 111 instructors at a staff meeting and informed them of my project and request. Over a course of three months September- December 2016, I regularly visited six different CMN 111 sections with the purpose of recruiting focal participants. I observed classes for one month, essentially "casing the joint" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) before I approached CMN 111 students about participating in my study. After the initial period of one month, I attended the two sections of CMN 111, one section was an hour and 20 minutes and the other section was 50 minutes per class period twice a week between October-December 2016. Every class session, I got there about ten minutes early and hung around after class ended to hear students talk informally before I started by asking students who stood out to me in class because they participated a lot. Then tried to talk to a variety of Black students including ones who hardly ever talked in class and ones with varying levels of participation in class. I define participation in terms of vocal participation in "official" class events as well as "unofficial" ways of participating, such as having unrelated conversations with classmates (before, during and after

class), doing work for other classes, or non-verbal communication like eye rolls, crossing arms, nodding, making eye contact with other students and the instructor, and taking notes. I initially wanted focal students who participated the most in the class, but after noticing patterns of non-verbal communication I tried to recruit students who represented a range of those kinds of verbal and non-verbal behaviors. I approached the students in between classes and asked if they were willing to let me interview and observe them. Even though I tried to get a representative group of students, I know that the students I ended up recruiting were still skewed more towards students who talked a lot in class (in both official and un-official ways) with the exception of one student.

As for the focus group recruitment process, using the connections established in previous employment, I sent recruitment emails and text messages to former students that I knew from the equity-based university program and asked if they would be interested in participating in the study. The goal was to recruit between 10-15 participants in addition to the three focal participants to divide into two focus groups. I recruited 15 participants for the focus groups plus the three-focal participants. This came to a total 18 (9 per focus group) participants. The participants were all speakers of AAE. It is important to note that even though I am recruiting Black students that are AAE speakers, not every Black student is a speaker of AAE and not every AAE speaker is Black. As a speaker and scholar of AAE, I determined, through class observations and previous interactions with the students from my former job or around campus, whether the students spoke AAE and recruited them.

Given time and resources, I would have observed all the participants within writing spaces, instead I choose three students who became my focal participants. For the purposes of my study, focal participants were observed in their CMN 111 classes, social and/or extracurricular settings in addition to participating in individual interviews and one of the focus

groups. The non-focal participants were only required to attend one of the two focus groups. The focal participants are invaluable opportunities further understand their language practices and experiences on a deeper level.

Focal Participants

In this section, I describe the rationale behind why I chose these three individual students as focal participants for my study. On average, there are only about 1-2 black students (if any) in each of the 20 sections of CMN 111. I did not recruit more focal participants because: 1) I could not determine if they all spoke AAE, 2) they did not want to be observed or 3) I did not receive permission to observation every section of CMN 111.

Brie. After the first few weeks of the start of my data collection process, I initially noticed Brie because in every CMN class I observed she refused to talk in class and managed to sit almost completely still for fifty minutes with her arms crossed with a neutral expression. Maya (another focal participant was in the same course section) and were talking briefly after class and Brie walked up to us and asked "what ya'll doing?" I explained to Brie my presence in the class and what my study was about. I was surprised when she asked me if she could be a part of it. At first, I did not know how Brie would fit into the study. She did not talk in class and until she spoke to me, I was not sure of her language practices. As I thought about it, Brie's silence in class but interest in my study represented something that I did not necessarily understand at the time. I was willing to explore Brie's silence in the classroom and how it spoke volumes in many ways, some of which will be explored in this dissertation.

Jerome. Fortunately for me I happened to visit Jerome's section when he was giving a speech. When I noticed how Jerome used rhetorical appeals rooted in African American Verbal

Traditions (AVT) and AAE, such as signifying and repetition to obtain and keep his audience's attention, I recruited him. While Jerome was speaking, I watched his instructor eagerly nod in agreement with Jerome rhetorical appeals. Later, when I asked Jerome how he did on his speech, he told me that he received an A. His feedback was that he had a great engaging tone and was appealing to the audience. His integration of AVT and AAE was successful in garnering a positive reaction and grade from his instructor. I asked Jerome to be a focal participant because I was interested in his use of language in classroom spaces and the process in which he decided to interact to and within his surroundings.

Maya. Maya was the first student that I asked to be a focal participant. In my first CMN 111 observation, the class had a current event discussion about the 2016 presidential election. Maya was one of the only students of color that spoke in the class. The other students were white and were expressing that they did not believe that Donald Trump would win against Hillary Clinton. As the white students were discussing this, there were non-verbal signs that the few students of color in the class were uncomfortable. Some stared at their desks, eyes were rolled, and arms were crossed. Maya expressed ideas that contradicted the white students' statements about the election. Maya: "Trump ain't nothing new, that's why he is going (emphasizes the *–ing* of going) to win". Notice the linguistic shift in the first part of the sentence, Maya's shift in language made her an ideal focal participant. I wanted to further explore her language practices and learn the reason for Maya's shifts. Was it an unconscious shift? Or was she code-meshing?

Non-focal participants. The non-focal participants were recruited from the equity-based program and from my personal and professional relationships. They were selected for the focus groups because they identified as Black/and or African American and I identified them as AAE

speakers. In total, 18 students participated in the study. The participants and their demographic information is listed below in table 1.

Table 3.1: Participant Demographic Information

Name	**Gender**	**Age**	**Major**	**Year**	**Composition Class**	**Race**	**Focus Group Attended**
Gabrielle (Brie)	Woman	18	Biology	Freshman	CMN 111-112	Black	1st group
Maya	Woman	19	Division of General Studies (Undecided)	Freshman	CMN 111-112	Black	2nd group
Jerome	Man	18	Business	Freshman	CMN 111-112	African-American	1st group
Angel	Woman	20	Communication	Sophomore	RHET 105	African-American	2nd group
Emma	Woman	19	Psychology	Sophomore	CMN 111-112	Bi-racial (Black & white)	2nd group
Dante	Man	18	Engineering	Freshman	RHET 105	Black	2nd group
Tasha	Woman	21	Psychology	Senior	RHET 101 &102	Black	2nd group
Brian	Man	19	Sociology	Sophomore	RHET 101 &102	Black	2nd group
Jamie	Woman	20	Social Work	Junior	RHET 101 &102	African American	2nd group
Bianca	Woman	18	Recreation, Sport and Tourism	Freshman	RHET 101 &102	African American	1st group
Diane	Woman	21	Recreation, Sport and Tourism	Junior	RHET 105	Black	1st group
Tiffany	Woman	21	Community Health	Senior	RHET 101 &102	African American	1st group
Maria	Woman	19	Business	Sophomore		Black	2nd group
Erin	Woman	20	Human Development	Junior	RHET 101 &102	Black	2nd group

			and Family Studies				
Patricia	Woman	21	English Minor: Secondary Education	Junior	CMN 111-112	Black	1st group
Deanna	Woman	22	Engineering	Senior	CMN 111-112	Black	1st group
Kayla	Woman	20	Broadcast Journalism	Junior	RHET 105	Black	2nd group
Andre	Man	19	Dance	Sophomore	RHET 105	African American	1st group

Table 3.1 (cont.)

*Note: All demographic information is reported based on the participants' responses.

Data Collection

This section will discuss the various methods I utilized to collect data. When incorporating an ethnographic framework, the goal of the researcher seeks immersion into the world of others to see what they view as meaningful and significant. It also allows for the researcher to experience the ordinary and extraordinary situations where people construct their lives (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995). My research questions are based on the how the students understand their own language experiences and I choose to study the phenomenon through the following methods: participant observations, focus groups and interviews. I choose the following data collection methods because they give me the insight on the main purposes of ethnographic research, what is happening within this phenomenon and most important how the participants make meaning of what is happening in their lives (Dyson and Genishi, 2005). The meanings that participants make are placed in a larger socio-cultural context that is complex and ever changing.

My purpose of this study was to see the ways that AAE speakers understand and engage in spaces that actively reject their language and cultural practices as well as investigating how issues of race and power play out in these contexts. The data collection process lasted from

September 2016 to March 2017. Information about data collection is listed in the table presented below.

Table 3.2: Types of Method Collection

Method Collection	**Frequency**	**Time**
Observations (classroom, outside the classroom, extra-curricular activities) (focal participants only)	44 (classroom: 29, non-classroom 15) (classroom: Maya: 15, Brie: 15, Jerome:14, non-classroom: Maya: 5, Brie: 5, Jerome:5)	2X a week- between October-December Maya +Brie- 50 minutes per class period Jerome: 1.5 hours per class period
Individual Interviews (focal participants only)	9 (3 each)	Maya (1st: 1 hour & 5 min., 2nd: 1 hour and 12 min, 3rd: Brie (1st: 1 hour &15 min 2nd :1 hour & 8 min, 3rd: 1 hour and Jerome (1st: 58 min. 2nd :1 hour & 2 min, 3rd: 1 hour & 7 min)
Informal unstructured conversations (impromptu lunches, after class conversations)	26 (Maya: 9, Jerome:9 , Brie:9	Varied from 15-45 minutes
Focus Groups (all participants)	2	1st Group: 1.5 hours 2nd Group- 1 hour and fifteen minutes

Focus groups

Focus groups are underutilized in socio-cultural language studies. A huge part of understanding socio-cultural contexts of language or communicative competence is about understanding the speakers' own knowledge about contexts and therefore the language choices that they make. As I have established in chapter two, Black students are often unacknowledged as sources of knowledge and their cultural and linguistic knowledge go unnoticed or are stigmatized. Oral discourse is the ways participants talk about their daily lives and many rhetorical skills are passed throughout and between generations. Indeed, "learning to act

rhetorically is a lifelong process. How such a practice develops- that is, how a culture goes about instructing members in rhetorical acts that lead to rhetorical understanding- will require continued exploration" (Garner & Calloway-Thomas, 2003, p. 54).

Since rhetorical and linguistic practices are socially and culturally constructed and negotiated through talk, focus groups are a way to see how AAE speakers in one space construct these meanings. The opportunity to have a group of AAE speakers discuss their language practices and communicative competence is a unique insight into the negotiation of academic spaces. Focus groups are defined as "an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics" (Beck *et al,* 1986, p.73). Rather than giving the voice to the "other", or knowing the "other", focus groups allow for the possibility to listen to the plural voices of the "other" as constructors and agents of knowledge and social change (Madriz, 2000). The group situation ensures "precedence is given to the participants' language, and the frameworks that they use to describe their experiences. Language is of importance because a sensitive understanding of people's lives requires shared symbols, meanings and vocabularies (Madriz, 2000, p. 840).

The participants came to the focus group with their own truths, which may be better elaborated through interaction with others. Individuals' truths may also be suppressed by group dynamics that can encourage conformity or silencing of marginalized viewpoints. It is important acknowledge that "beliefs, ideas, opinions and understandings are not generated by individuals in splendid isolation, but rather as built in interaction with others, in specific social contexts" (Wilkinson, 1998, p.193). The knowledge that was collected in this focus group consists of personal opinions and experiences that relate to language, writing and race. I would also like to explore these opinions and experiences in a way that builds a collective meaning. Participants will have the opportunity to tell their stories and provide rich description about their

perspectives. While I aim to create this kind of space, researchers cannot predict the ways participants will interact, so it is important to explore the relationship between focus group participants. Including segments of the transcripts from the focus groups, not only individual quotes that are taken out of context, allow us to see the shared meaning making. The focus groups were semi-structured which allowed me, the moderator, to ask probing and follow-up questions when necessary. Interview protocol consisted of questions such as: Why did you chose to attend this school; what composition class did you take; what was your experience; have you ever heard of the terms *Ebonics* and *Black English*? What do they mean to you; How would you describe your language—your everyday language?

The moderator embodied an empathic role, which built rapport. The moderator's role was to set the rules of conduct (e.g. be respectful, turn-taking, no interruptions, and no side conversations) (Morgan, 1997). Before the focus groups started, rules were established by the participants and these rules played a role in preventing situations of tension and upheaval in the group. The focus groups took place on campus at a time that conveniently worked with the schedule of the participants. The focus groups were recorded, and I took hand written notes. The two focus groups consisted of nine participants each was conducted with each focal participant attending at least one group. The first focus group one lasted one hour and twenty minutes and the second focus group lasted one hour and fifteen minutes.

Interviews

Qualitative interviews seek to describe central themes in the life of the participants. The main task of interviewing is to understand the meanings behind what participants say (Bogden & Biklen, 2011). Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. In my case, interviews helped me to further understand the participants'

perspectives about their language use and experiences in writing classrooms. I formally interviewed the three focal participants and had several informal discussions with them. This served to follow up on responses from the focus groups, learn more about the backgrounds of the participants and follow up on my observations in the classrooms and other spaces. I interviewed the focal participants three times each. Each interview had varying times (see chart above) depending on what was going on in the focal participants lives i.e. classroom experiences and the follow-up questions asked. All the interviews were audio recorded (given the participants' consent), and I simultaneously took notes to note important non-verbal communication and cues. The interviews lasted between one and two hours per focal participant.

Participant Observation

There is no substitute for observing the phenomena of human interaction. Participant observation is a method used to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena. Observations, specifically in my case, allowed me to see the participants' actual language practices. Therefore, I observed the three focal participants in college campus settings such as cafeterias, student unions, classrooms, study groups, or extracurricular activities or other spaces the participants select. Since this project is developed around student voice, the spaces I observed were chosen by the participants. I specifically asked the participants about the spaces they believe their language shifts, outside the classroom, and observed them in those settings. My goal was to observe each focal participant on 8-10 occasions, but I observed each focal participant a total of 20 times, with the exception of Jerome who I observed 19 times. Each observation lasted between 30-90 minutes (see figure 2). The observations did not focus on the content of the interactions and conversations; they focused on the participant's language use and practices and their experiences afterward. Essentially, I observed how the participants talked and

the perceptions of how that talk was received. The participants' interactions were with students who are not involved in the study. I informed the non-participants why I was observing and asked whoever the participants are interacting with if they agreed to be observed.

Even though a large part of this study is to understand how the participants perceived their language practices and experiences, the data attained through participant observation gave more context to participants' subjective reporting of their experiences and practices. Participant observation is also useful for developing an understanding of the physical, social, and cultural contexts in which the participants live and their relationships with others. Participant observation can be integral to understanding the scale and complexities of the participants' experiences.

Data Analysis

Data analysis includes my field notes from the focus groups, interviews and observations and interview and focus group audio recordings. The field notes recorded detail the interactions that took place during each focus group, interview and observation and were composed from my observations, notes, and audio recordings. The analysis also included the actual transcriptions from the audio recordings of the focus groups and interviews. To be able to answer my research questions effectively, I conducted a thematic analysis by reviewing the field notes (from the focus group, participant observation and the interviews) and transcripts separately and looked for data that stood out or that was reoccurring. Then, I reviewed them again and looked for common themes such as legitimacy of AAE, experiences in composition classes, being Black campus. I coded my field notes and transcriptions of audiotaped data (focus group and interviews) for recurring themes posited by the participants. These themes emerged from the interviews, observations and focus groups. While focus groups, interviews and observations provided copious amounts of information that contributed to an initial understanding of how AAE

speakers negotiate language interactions in writing and college spaces for the purposes of my dissertation, I will only highlight a few broad themes and contradictions within those themes.

Chapter Four: "What's Wrong with the Way We Talk?": Student Relationships with African American English

Introduction

This chapter delves into how the participants of this study experience and understand the dialect of AAE. An essential part of this study is to develop an understanding of the participants' knowledge about their language repertoires and how these repertoires, in turn, are perceived in various spaces. Then, with the scholarship of Langston Hughes, Derrick Bell and Charles Mills, I consider the role race plays in language perceptions and the false premise of Standard English as social mobility for Black AAE speaking students. In the following excerpt, the focal participants of the study are having a casual discussion. This informal conversation led to the beginning of the participants' conceptualization of their language use both in written and verbal forms.

In the basement of the Student Center, where the food court is located, Maya dips a fry into her chocolate milkshake as Brie turns up her face in disgust "Ew, that's nasty". Maya laughs and Jeremy joins in and responds, "It's the only way to eat them". It's mid-afternoon and the food court is quiet, so their laughter echoes in the corner where we are seated. Brie looks down at her phone and sighs:

Dominique: *What's the matter, Brie?*

Brie: *I have to go to class soon* (and signs again).

Dominique: *Why the sigh?*

I soon found out that Brie had just received her first speech grade from CMN 111 and seemed frustrated by the feedback.

Maya: *What she say?*

Brie*: My tone is not professional* (in a Received Pronunciation (RP) British accent).

Maya stares at Brie, while chewing on the straw of her milkshake,

Brie: *What?* (Directing this question at Brie)

Maya: *You know, you need to talk a certain way.*

Brie: (rolls her eyes) *What's wrong with the way we (added emphasis on the "we") talk?*

By rolling her eyes, Brie expresses her irritation with Maya's comment. What's wrong with the way ***we*** talk is one of the questions essential to this study. Although the straightforward answer is that nothing is wrong with Brie's language use, the weight of socio-cultural and historical factors makes the answer to this question a lot more complicated. In an individual interview, I was interested in gathering more context behind Brie's response to Maya.

Brie: "I think, like, I have a way that I talk and it's off putting to people (referring to white people), but I don't care about what nobody thinks about it. People wanna come for you, and try to talk to you like you slow, but I know better. So, when Maya say, like, that's wrong, Imma be like why?

While Brie does not give a name to her speech, simply referring to AAE as "the way I talk", she does perceive her speech as off-putting to others. Off-putting refers to the usage of AAE linguistic aspects in spaces where Academic Standard English is the expected language choice. She understands that others may criticize and assign judgments like being unprofessional or unintelligent by the way she speaks. These are common assertions made about AAE speakers. I asked Brie why she thought of her language as off-putting: "You know how people think Black people is". As we talk longer, I ask Brie if she thinks the way she talks is wrong.

Brie: *Nope and nobody will tell me any different*

Dominique: *Why do you think others think it's wrong?*

Brie shrugs, *I mean cause it's not what's written in the books, not official.*

Dominique: *Why is it not official?*

Brie: *Honestly, because we (again placing emphasis on the pronoun "we") speak it.*

Dominque: *And who are we?*

Brie: *Black. You know stuff don't exist if white people don't approve it.*

Students' Understanding of AAE

Brie "flips the script" on standard language. If we return to the vignette at the beginning of the chapter, Brie imitated a received pronunciation (RP) British English accent, when she recited the feedback given to her. The origins of English are deeply rooted in Great Britain. And RP is considered the standard in England. It is interesting that Brie chose to use a RP accent, which is widely understood as a very white and elitist dialect, even though the RP English dialect we know today has profoundly evolved over several centuries. Thus, Brie makes the connection between the relationship of language and race. Operating with the knowledge that white people are considered to be knowledge producers and the gatekeepers who get to decide what's appropriate (Royster, 2001; Kynard, 2013).

RP British is the dominant standard language in the United Kingdom. It was considered the language of power and was utilized to reinforce power structures. It is estimated that only about 5% of Great Britain actually uses RP (Horobin, 2016). Brie's usage of RP on a superficial level indexes the popular idea that British English is "proper" and official in a way that AAE is not. However, if the tone and context of the language use is considered, Brie's mock accent can also be seen as a mechanism to downplay the status of RP. By inducing a sarcastic tone and adopting a somber facial expression, she is indicating the humor behind the statement. By using this "proper" accent in a comedic way, she is dismantling the power of RP, which is also dismantling the power of the feedback that Brie's instructor provided. Overall, using RP is Brie's way of questioning notions of "professional" speaking.

Jane Hill is an anthropologist who is known for coining the term “mock Spanish”. Mock Spanish can be defined and implemented in the following various ways: (1) Semantic derogation: A borrowing of neutral or positive Spanish loanwords. (2) Euphemism: A borrowing of negative Spanish words. (3) Affixing: A borrowing of Spanish morphological elements. (4) Hyper-Anglicization which translates to absurd mispronunciations (Hill, 1999). Hill argues it is through these mechanisms that racist and discriminatory ideologies are practiced. Bourdieu (1991) noted that linguistic power is constructed, “Through a complex historical process…a particular language or set of linguistic practices has emerged as the dominant and legitimate language and other dialects have been eliminated or subordinated to it.” (p. 5). Stigmatized languages and dialects, if they are recognized, are often used (by non-speakers) to joke about the groups that speak these languages and reinforce stigmas tied to the marginalized language. Clearly identifying the dialect or language as an illegitimate language that cannot be used seriously or as Brie puts it “professionally”.

“Flipping the script”, is defined as reversing the position or situation and is one of the rhetorical aspects of AAE (Gilyard, 1996; Smitherman, 2003). The fact that Brie is making a joke about her speech feedback implies that she understands what her instructor means by “professional”. From Brie’s perspective, she does not need to learn how to use a professional tone of English, she already knows how to be “professional”. The choice to use RP British English is also “flipping the script”. In the common way that non-standard dialects are mocked, Brie is mocking the highly perceived RP dialect. Going back to Bourdieu’s quote, Brie is disenfranchising RP British English and Standard English. In this moment, she is chipping at the hierarchical aspects of language ideologies, reducing the power that certain Englishes (the ones associated with white bodies) have been holding over the last few centuries. Brie notes, “why

does she (referring to her instructor) get to tell me what's right, she knew what I was talkin' about, this was petty. This was my speech, so I should be able to speak how I speak. Right?"

Brie made it known that she can do what her instructor requests but is attempting to challenge what exactly "professional" means. Ownership becomes an interesting notion when we think about Brie's reaction. Would adjusting her speech reduce the agency of her speech?

One way that Brie challenges these notations is not only by choosing to use AAE in forbidden spaces, but she challenges the notion that her English is wrong by asking the naysayer why? In conjunction with the mock RP British accent, Brie is making a powerful statement about academic expectations. Brie has challenged both her peers and composition instructor multiple times, albeit in different ways. When Brie asked Maya about why she has to speak a certain way, Maya responded "that's just how it is".

Additionally, Brie reports that when she asked her instructor a similar question, the instructor responded similarly to Maya. If Brie does not do anything else, she does not assume what others tell her is correct, she takes the position of trying to get others to specifically say why, which questions the norm itself. Others inability, especially her composition instructor, to give a detailed answer allows for the possibility that Standard English is not the norm but a social construction. Therefore, if it can be constructed, it can be deconstructed.

Maya's use of language for social mobility. After Maya's interaction with Brie, I asked Maya to explain her perspective about the conversation that led to Maya's response of "that's just how it is". In a one-on-one interview, I asked Maya why "that's just how it is".

Maya: *It's always been there, nobody told us why. They just told us we speak this way at school and stuff if wanted to go college and get good jobs.*

Dominique: *Who told you?*

Maya: *Like teachers and my grandma…adults.*

It is interesting that Maya cannot recall an explanation about why Standard English was so important. The convenient lack of history behind Standard English is what sustains the powerful ideologies behind it. Standard/Academic English has been presented as a way to reach modernity, the entrance into the land of opportunities. Standard English is presented as a neutral language, one that does not belong to anyone or have any origins. It has no accent. Like whiteness, Standard English is seen as the default, the norm, it is something that we are not taught the origins of, it simply just is. To some extent, many of us are taught to believe in the power and mobility of Standard English.

Therefore, Maya's perceptions are not uncommon. AAE is not associated with success, Standard English is the way of social mobility. Knowing these deep-rooted ideologies, why would Maya believe that AAE has equal footing in the world? All of her life, Maya was told that speaking a certain way is the mythical ladder to success. This idea has been so deeply socialized within her (and other students) that she corrects herself automatically when speaking AAE in the classroom. There even moments when she is not always conscious of her self-correction. This self-correction becomes even more note-worthy because Maya is the one focal participant whose shifts between dialects are the most obvious and frequent. During my observation of Maya in class, she often catches herself speaking AAE, but abruptly corrects herself. For example, an excerpt from one of Maya's speeches in class about the effectiveness of Title IX is below:

"Is Title IX ineffective? Universities often be- (pauses, looks at her notes and clears her throat) Universities are often found to be in violation of the law. Womens are not always treated equally." Once I asked about these self -correcting measures, Maya responded, "I feel, like, tense in class. I don't want no one to think I'm like this dum-dum who only got here cause I'm Black.

It's like you can't do anything wrong or you done." Maya's reaction to AAE is not necessarily negative, but she is replying to the pressure of what others define as becoming successful. Feelings of inadequacy, in Maya's case are what causes her to correct herself and, in some cases, she hyper-corrects (i.e. the use womens in an essay) (Smitherman, 1977). Being in a gatekeeping course, like a composition course, can often heighten those feelings for Black AAE speaking students like Maya. From my observation and interviews with Maya, Maya seems to be able to place an emphasis on being competent with is common with students of color, especially in PWI spaces. These feelings of inadequacy and fear of failure are common among students who do not fit into the middle-class white student check box. Students who do not fit into that category are still expected to adhere to the rules of school, and these notions were based on a system that was not intended for them. For Maya, the stakes are high, she believes that she cannot make any mistakes, or it will ruin her chances for being successful in college.

What Maya does not realize is that while she is attempting to code-switch, she is expressing her language repertoires in ways that go beyond "speaking right". Maya is code-meshing. Code meshing is the act of combining local, vernacular, colloquial, and world dialects of English on formal assignments and in everyday conversation, in an attempt to embrace the diverse world in which we reside (Young, 2014). By combining AAE with Standard English, a successful way to communicate with a broader audience is created. According to Young, there is a major difference between the practice of code switching and the act of code meshing. When practicing code switching, you alter how you speak and behave. It teaches you to conform to certain environments. However, code meshing is the alternative to this oppressive practice. Code meshing embraces people's cultural differences and allows them to authentically illuminate their personality. Young (2014) continuously argues that code-switching is connected to racial self-

understanding and suggests further that code-switching is not just an isolated school practice, a necessary way into success, but rather another social construct "perpetually thrust upon Blacks to prove themselves when communicating, particularly in the mainstream and/or with non-Blacks" (p.5). Code-switching is then an act of racial compromise for African American English users, one that code-meshing pedagogy desires to move beyond.

The main goal of composition classes is to prepare incoming students with a set of skills that are supposed to provide a modicum of success in college and beyond (Kynard, 2013). But how do these expectations play out without the knowledge of AAE? It contributes to Maya making a choice to mask what she perceives as non-academic language practices. Academic success is believed to be the acquirement of a certain level of skills that can lead to social and financial mobility. This shows when Maya says, "I don't have no choice, I have to make it". Maya's determination to succeed is not only rooted in academic success but is also rooted in assimilation.

While Maya is not striving to assimilate, she is striving for academic success, which is tied to assimilation and western values and traditions. The predominant schooling narrative is that if Black students learn the language and practices of school, they will be successful in society. This narrative is developed without context about social identities in the United States and it does not acknowledge that one narrative does not fit all. Maya shows concern for how others perceive her and adjusts her language use to represent these perceptions. When I asked Maya about what these expectations were and how she learned them, she provided a similar response to "it is what it is":

"You know, everybody grow up being told to speak right, not be loud polite like. You know when you around, um, different people. My grandmamma say if you go on around those white folk at that school talking bout ain't and finna they gon laugh you right out of the door".

In this response, Maya gives me a glimpse of her language socialization and preparation for college. This is also a racialization of her language. Maya's grandmother's advice means that if you use AAE, i.e. the ain'ts and finnas, there will be serious, negative consequences. Though, Maya's grandmother speaks in AAE while giving her advice about not speaking AAE. By using the language of AAE, Maya's grandmother emphasized a point that clearly stuck with Maya. While Maya's grandmother is not necessarily showing that she perceives AAE as incorrect, she is saying that at a predominantly white institution there is not an understanding of AAE language practices. These misunderstandings and explicit erasures of AAE in school settings place Maya in a vulnerable position. Maya understands her choices when it comes to communicative competence, but her anxiety about others' perceptions of her language use causes her to experience uncertainty about whether she is making the right choices. That anxiety ultimately contributes to her hypercorrection and self-correction when she is in her composition class.

To further complicate this uncertainty, Maya becomes frustrated when participating in class because she was not being taken seriously as a student. This was evident in a student group presentation where Maya felt excluded from contributing to the development of the project, "You (Dominique) know how the group project went, yeah, I didn't say ain't or nothing like that but they were still trying me. And yeah when you are different from them (referring to white students) they don't always get you". The assignments and activities in the composition class that Maya takes has a sizable class participation and group work component. I will discuss the specific details of Maya's group project in chapter five, but her interaction shows that she feels excluded because of her difference (i.e. her blackness) and this pushes her to present herself to others in a way that is deemed "acceptable" in academic settings, which entails code-switching

and erases her ability to code-mesh. Therefore, her past and present experiences influence her reaction to Brie, in that "you gotta learn to speak a certain way".

Jerome's racial competence. During the conversation between Maya and Brie, Jerome remained silent. I was curious about his perspective because in his class speeches Jerome uses AAE to emphasize points and sees it as an asset. Jerome says, "I'm a people person, I know how to talk to people" giving me a big smile. I then asked, "How do learn how to be a people person? And his response was, "You gotta listen first, see what everybody else is doing." Jerome is described as energetic and charming, according to the other focal participants, Maya and Brie. I can corroborate this, in every interaction that I had with Jerome, he was always smiling, and he would always say hi to a fellow student or teacher. In the excerpt at the beginning of the chapter, Jerome does not take a stance either way regarding Maya and Brie's disagreement. But in an individual interview, I asked Jerome what he thought about the conversation that had taken place.

Jerome: *We talk how we talk. If everybody walked around talking the same (pause) I'm a very social person, I know how to talk to people (big smile).*

Dominique: *And how do you manage that?*

Jerome: *You gotta listen first, see where everybody else is at. The way I see it, I have an asset that most students in my class don't have. Giving speeches is boring, I make it fun.*

In every instance that I observed, whether it was in his class or at an extracurricular event, Jerome was actively engaged and verbally participated. I noticed that in these interactions Jerome actively shifted his patterns of speech in different situations. This is, of course, reflective of his ability to be communicatively competent. He not only changes his repertoires in different settings, instead he moves away from the narrow dichotomous ideas of "home language" and

"school language". His language consciously shifts even in classroom settings. From Jerome's perspective, language shifts are one of the ways to emphasize his points. As Jerome says in the intercept above, he sees his ability to speak in AAE as an asset that he can use to be successful in classroom spaces. Jerome's response is calling for the acceptance of AAE language practices and sees it as the ability to not only speak AAE, but it is also an ability to be able to read people. His interactions with others are strategic and display racial communicative competence. By knowing how other people think, he can gauge the type of approach he should to take in that particular context. This is a skill that all the participants show at some point in the duration of the study. The other participants exhibit the same skill but have different interpretations and responses in similar contexts.

For instance, Jerome gave a persuasive speech to his CMN 111 class about the South Sea trade disputes between China and other Asian countries. In this speech, he uses rhetorical practices of AAE to emphasize a few of his main points to garner the audience's favor.

"Good Morning", Jerome pauses and looks intently around the room and waits for a response. After about 5 seconds the class responds, "Good morning."

"I'm here to talk with you about an issue that needs our attention. Raise your hand if you have sibling or friend that took something of yours without asking?"

(The entire class raises their hands)

"Now raise your hand if you took something that belongs to someone else. Don't be shy. I wear my brother's J's (an athletic shoe, Nike Air Jordan's) all the time."

(the class laughs and less than half the class raise their hands)

The feedback that he received from his instructor praised his strong tone, engaging introduction and adaptation to his audience. In all these areas Jerome used aspects of African American oral traditions, and Jerome agreed with his instructor's assessment. Jerome confidently and

strategically used his repertoires and rhetorical skills to deliver a speech that persuaded and interested the audience, even though it was not a topic that the students actively thought about or were even interested in. One of the most common aspects of African American rhetoric that Jerome used in this speech is the use of call and response. Call and response is defined as a certain type of interaction between the speaker and their audience. The speaker makes a statement or asks a question, which activates the "call" for a "response", which is provided by the speaker's audience. The action of call and response can be interpreted from many perspectives. Call and response is also practiced in various contexts such as churches, public gatherings, music (Gospel, Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, Hip-Hop) and children's rhymes. The usage of call and response created a space for engagement in a space where speeches were usually perceived as one-sided. Usually in this context, the audiences are the receivers of information, but they are not included in the production of that information or knowledge. Call and response allows for more interactions with the audience and can symbolize notions of inclusivity and community.

Although Jerome used rhetorical practices of AAE in the speech discussed above, he did not use it in his next speech, which was about the history and status quo of a controversial topic. The goal of the status quo speech was to inform the audience about an issue that was supposed to consist of arguments and facts that were "objective" in order to inform students about the issue, but not push them to take a stance on it. Jerome's speech was about tax breaks for large corporations and businesses. He utilized other sources to describe the issue and heavily cited definitions of the terms used to discuss the topic. Curious as to why Jerome varied these methods of rhetoric, I asked him how he approached the two different assignments.

"They (instructors) talk about rhetorical appeals of Socrates/Aristotle, but I have a different appeal. I mean I guess it's all the same in the end being that it does the same thing. Saying things in different ways is key to getting people to listen to you".

Many the rhetorical appeals that are discussed in composition courses are rooted in Aristotle's rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos and logos, which have been landmarks in the college composition classroom. This is how students are taught to think about argumentation, but Jerome is challenging this notion. He insists on bringing his own appeals to the classroom. Jerome argues that the way he does his speeches varies from other students in class but is just as effective. Therefore, he can utilize AAE to enhance his speaking, but only in a specific context. For the most part, he strays away from the syntactic and grammatical features of AAE in his speeches but utilized the tonal inflictions and styles of AAE. Jerome's usages led me to the question that is asked among scholars, when is AAE accepted?

What's the proper way to talk? The focal participants' views, while differing from each other, resonated within the focus groups in various ways. Different stances were taken about how the participants defined their language repertoires. Each group held a different set of beliefs about perceptions of language and expectations of Black students. The line is not always clear in terms of the relationships that the participants have with their language skills.

For instance:

Tasha*: Like you got to change to the way talk to fit in-*

Kayla: *But it's more than that, it's different when you Black.*

Erin: *Yeah, like, you know we have to be better, no weakness*

Kayla: *Ain't nothing wrong with the way we talk*

Tasha: *We weren't raised to talk proper, you know so we had to learn.*

As the conservation in the focus group continues, there is an in-depth discussion about the participants' relationship to their language use. For students like Erin and Tasha, their idea of competence is embedded into the well-known notions of American meritocracy. Meritocracy is the idea that hard work and dedication to a specific task will yield positive results. In educational settings, meritocracy is heavily valued and stems from ideologies of the social contract and liberalism. What it does not consider is how social identities like race or gender complicate these values. As shown in this chapter, participants do not have one conception or consensus about the "correctness" of AAE. However, students clearly have an awareness that language practices and race are explicitly tied together and furthermore they know that their blackness and language do not have the same value in these PWI spaces. What differs is how the participants apply these knowledges in academic spaces. The actions and thoughts of the participants imply that their language practices do not just tell us about how others see this language, it tells them how the world sees them as Black students.

Furthermore, in 1st focus group, participants continue to have conversations surrounding language and language socialization:

Patricia: *Yeah, I think as you grow up you learn how to talk when you different settings like you shouldn't say certain things a certain way around teachers and stuff, y'all know.*

Diane, Deanna, Tiffany: *Yeah*

Bianca: *I learn by watching my mom talk to white people or like these old school TV shows like the Cosbys.*

Jamie: *Like when trying to get job – you know just talk proper*

Patricia: *Exactly, when you learn how to pronounce words and-*

Jamie: *Mmhmm 'cause I say stuff wrong all the time*

Dominique: *Can you give an example?*

Jamie: *Um… like you not supposed to say you is. They teach you how to pronounce like use right words.*
Bianca: *You is kind…* (singsong tone) (Quoting the film, The Help)

Jamie: *Shut up…* (laughing) *you know or like finna, like, structurally correct*

Dominique: *Who teaches you?*

Deanna: *I mean like everybody… your parents, teachers, authority figures and the like-*

Andre: *But it's hard but then you like get used to talking specific way and you self- conscious all the time*

Many commonalities are shown among the participants across the focal participants and focus groups. When Jamie talks about the "wrong" way to say things, she is implying that AAE is not correct which is pejorative. When speakers minimalize the aspects of AAE they further delegitimize AAE. I struggle with defining AAE, because there is no consensus on what it should be called and what it entails. Over the last few decades what to call AAE has become a public debate. Should AAE be merely a dialect or it is a distinct language? The general public views languages as having high status, while dialects do not. A language has the privilege of being legitimately different from another language and dialects can be viewed as corruptions of a language. Ralph Fasold argues that the impact viewing AAE as a language can disrupt the discourses about Standard English ideologies:

> Given the yawning chasm between language and folk ideas, "standard" and "dialect" for linguists to attempt to convey what we have learned about Ebonics while using the terms like Standard English and African American English dialect starts us off immediately with a double handicap. On the other hand, if Ebonics were a language and presented as such, much of the mismatch in presuppositions can be avoided. The Ebonics language would not be a dialect and therefore not be assumed to be a corruption of anything but real in its own right. As a language, the question of its "rising up" to the standard of English would not even come up. A language has its own standards, and the standards of some other language would simply be irrelevant. I do not know that I have been able to get across the linguistic perception of the nature of Ebonics much more efficiently by framing its relation to English as one of language to language. This newer discourse just seems to work better (As cited in Smitherman, 2004, p.277).

We cannot begin to change our perception of AAE if the very vocabulary we use to describe it has implications of inferiority. It is important to remember that the construction of language has socio-political implications (Baron, 2000 & Smitherman, 2004). Throughout these discussions of language, it was still not clear where they learned to refer to their own language as wrong. But this is not uncommon, Labov explains, "there is a very small vocabulary available to most people for talking about language: the same terms recur over and over as we hear that the other people's pronunciation has a 'nasal twang', is 'sing-song' , is 'harsh or 'guttural', 'lazy' or 'sloppy'. Grammar is said to be mixed-up or illogical'". (Labov, 1970, p.292). Generally, people lack the discourse to talk about language variation. Furthermore, speakers of a non-standard English can have even less access to the discourse related to AAE and other language variations.

The Myth of Social Mobility and Meritocracy

Many of the participants' responses about language rely on ideas of assimilation. In one of the focus groups, Erin noted "It's important to follow the rules, like school is supposed to teach you how to act when you get a job. Everyone follows the rules, that's how you make it. You don't get to be Barack (former US president) by talking crazy". The connection that Erin made to President Barack Obama, the first Black president of the United States, is a key example in the belief of Standard English as social mobility. This further supports to the idea of meritocracy and "talking crazy" (speaking AAE) is detrimental to AAE speakers' success such as becoming president of the United States. President Obama is well-known for being able code-mesh effectively with Standard English syntax and Black rhetorical traditions. Obama's style spoke to a diverse population and if President Obama had not code-meshed, his presidential victory would have been unlikely (Smitherman & Alim, 2012). Erin's notion about following the rules are not necessarily always true. Smitherman and Alim (2012) take up the role of language

in racial politics by addressing the underlying white supremacy ideologies in language by using "the Black folk idiom 'if it ain't [w]hite, it ain't right'… Because, as Americans, whether we like or not, we not only see race, but we hear it too" (p.25). To further explore this, I would like use Langston Hughes' work to connect ideologies of race, language and the burden of racism that Black communities face. Hughes wrote a series of short stories that are social commentaries through his fictional folk hero, Jesse B. Simple. Simple is a poor Black man who lives in Harlem. He is simple, funny and a wise character. The story was "usually over a glass of beer, he tells me his tales, mostly in high humor, but sometimes with a pain in his soul as sharp as the occasional hurt of that bunion on his right foot. Sometimes, as the old blue says, Simple might be 'laughing to keep from crying' but even then, he keeps you laughing too" (Hughes, 1961, p. viii). His accounts of his troubles with work, women, money, and life in general often reveal, through their very simplicity, the difficulties of being a poor Black man in a white supremacist society. Hughes saw Simple as a composite of the many people he met in Harlem. In the foreword to *The Best of Simple*, titled "Who is Simple?" Hughes wrote:

> I cannot truthfully state, as some novelists do at the beginning of their books, that these stories are about "nobody living or dead." The facts are that these tales are about a great many people—although they are stories about no specific persons as such. But it is impossible to live in Harlem and not know at least a hundred Simples. (Hughes, 1961, p. vii)

Simple lived in a world the people knew experienced their moments of happiness, felt their sorrow, and shared their language. Simple knows who he is, and is aware of his status in American society (Watkins, 1971). The *Simple* stories provided a means of reconstructing and reflecting the thoughts of Black people over two decades. Simple, Hughes' most popular and enduring character was his interpretation and commentary on the lives of ordinary Black people. Simple was the embodiment of the wisdom and wit of the Black communities that has been constantly undervalued and overlooked. Analyzing of the exchanges between Simple and Boyd

consistently exude a new Black consciousness and self-acceptance (Watkins, 1971). Hughes' work speaks to the challenges that Black communities are constantly encountering, especially Black students.

The participants in my study have expressed the stress they face when knowledge and language rooted in blackness is chastised, ignored and sequentially erased. It is no surprise that students see the negative consequences of their blackness PWI spaces. What other realities have students been allowed to explore? While participants like Kayla and Brie actively challenge these deficit perceptions, they are not naïve to the consequences of AAE in the classroom.

In the seminal text, *Takin' and Testifyin'*, Smitherman argues that the "push-pull" dynamic creates some psychological distress for Black communities, especially ones that speak Black English (1977). So, if we return to the character Simple, Hughes implied that Simple recognizes the oppressive forces that attempt to make him assimilate. In one story, Simple called for a way to help fight the brainwashing, mental abuse, and tensions that Black people endured when communicating with white people or Black folks that have assimilated. His message to his Black readers was "think Black," which implied a strategy of psychological resistance based on positive reactions to the negative psychological tensions generated by the issue of racism (Hughes, 1961).

The education of Black people is an issue that has created tensions and is an issue on which Black communities especially need to "think Black". Simple's position was that Black children were not being told the truth in institutional settings. School taught one to be honest, work hard, and do right; but it did not teach Black students that receiving a diploma does not mean justice and equality (Hughes, 1950). And as Smitherman would say: nor does talking "right". White spaces can be oppressive and psychologically damaging to Black students.

Hughes rationale, presented in the stories was based on the idea that white colleges were psychologically oppressive. This does not mean that Black students would not succeed academically in PWIs, but it might that a toil psychologically. Simple says:

> Life is hard for a colored boy [or girl] in the [adulthood] stage to learn from white folks. If F.D. [his cousin] does learn it around white folks, he is going to learn it the hard way. That might make him mad, or sad. If he gets mad, he is going to be bad. If he's sad, he is going to just give up and not get nowheres (Hughes, 1953, p. 161).

Blacks students in PWIs risk having identity issues about who they are and Simple would rather protect Black students from the unhealthy psychological issues of a PWI. Smitherman aptly exposes the layers of complexity that surrounds race and when education is involved, she states that "teachers should be bout the serious business of educating young Black minds to deal with (and if necessary, in) a society of power politics (Smitherman, 1977, p.234).

Simple recognized that these problems in higher education were detrimental to Black people because it kept them at odds with themselves. For instance, he understood that the value of an education had the practical outcome of preparing someone for employment, but he realized that education at PWIs contributed to racial identity problems. Linguistic identity issues are also prevalent. Speakers of AAE have negative perceptions of the dialect because they are getting these messages about language from people that do not understand that AAE is a language. This can cause major conflicts among AAE speakers. Like Simple, Smitherman discusses how education systems and certain scholarly research make the language of Black children out to be deficit and deviant. Smitherman also addresses the myth of success in education through assimilation and Standard English. She uses the following quote by Carter G. Woodson to support her argument:

> The educational system, as it has developed both in Europe and America, is an antiquated process,

which does not hit the mark even in the case of the needs of the white man himself …even if the Negroes do successfully imitate the white, nothing new has thereby been accomplished. You simply have a larger number of persons doing what others have been doing. (Woodson ad cited in Smitherman, 1977, p.209)

Through the deficit view of language variation, it was all about the everlasting goal to uplift Black people. But who does it really benefit? These are ideological points that keep reoccurring in the conversations about race, language and education. In one story, Simple wrote a poem about Jim Crow and Simple's friend, Boyd, gave feedback about the grammar of his poem:

"I agree that the sentiment of your poem is correct," I said. But I cannot vouch for the grammar" Simple responded
"If I get the sense right," answered Simple, "the grammar can take care of itself. There are plenty of Jim Crowers who speak grammar but do evil. I have not had enough schooling to put words together right- but I know some white folks who have went to school forty years and do not do right. I figure it is better to do right than to write right, is it not" (Hughes, 1951, p. 36)

These spaces have implemented a certain ideology about what is acceptable and ultimately successful in these spaces. Simple's position was based on the idea that rather than experiencing shame about being Black, looking Black, feeling Black, and acting Black, one should cultivate a sincere pride based on dignity, self-worth, and an appreciation of Black culture. Simple was not anti-white, he was pro-Black (Watkins, 1971). He suggested that self- love and acceptance was an idea that majority of Blacks should be able to feel. The stories implied that self-love (language and race wise) was an important first step in raising consciousness.

I state this because the participants in my study are dealing with the stigma of their Blackness and the language practices that can go along with social identities. Institutions of higher learning are often constructed with the purpose of giving white students access to education while reinforcing white supremacy values. The access to higher education is normalized and understood as a predominantly white possession (Kynard, 2013). When students of color enter these spaces, they must carefully navigate, or they risk academic failure. Students

of color that attend PWIs have been monitored and policed in ways that white students are not.

Smitherman (2004) points out:

> Suspicion and skepticism are common Black reactions to Black users of LWC [Standard English] rhetorical styles. These perceptions exist simultaneously with the belief that needs to master LWC in order to "get ahead" I call it "linguistic push-pull", Du Boise call it "double consciousness". The farther removed one is from mainstream "success" the greater degree of cynicism about this ethnolinguistic, cultural ambivalence. Jesse Jackson knows about this; so, did Malcolm X and Martin Luther King; so does Louis Farrakhan. The oratory of each is LWC in its grammar, but AVT in its rhetorical style" (p.239).

The value of Standard English is present in Speicher's interview with a university staff member:

> But my opinion always has been that you have to learn to survive in the real world, and if you speak Black English, there is no way you're going to survive. There's no way you're going to get the job you really want. There's no way that you're going to make an income that's going to make you live right" (As cited in Lippi-Green, 2012, p.197).

To uncover the root of these concepts and ideologies that the participants hold, I turn to Mills' (1997) *The Racial Contract*. *The Racial Contract* makes the claim that white supremacy is an unacknowledged political system. It is a system that other acknowledged political systems were built on and yet there are still no political theories. White supremacy needs to be recognized as a political system so that it challenges the assumptions of white political philosophy. In short, Mills' arguments are the following: white supremacy exists, it should be seen as a political system and that white supremacy can be theorized as being based on a contract that is between whites, the racial contract.

To provide context for the racial contract we must understand the philosophical idea of Kant's social contract. The social contract was instrumental in a government that was based on the popular consensus of individuals who are equals. The social contract is deceiving in many ways because it gives the illusion that it applies to everyone. Mills (1997) makes the point of saying "we the people" really means "we the white people" (p.3). The social contract is key to

creating the illusion that racism was and continues to be a deviation from the ideal of a race neutral, color-blind, meritocratic society. In contrast, the racial contract "establishes a racial polity, a racial state, and a racial juridical where the statuses of white and non-whites are clearly demarcated whether by law or custom" (Mills, 1997, p.14). The racial contract is complex because it has political, moral and epistemological parts to it. It is a set of meta-agreements between whites that categorizes people of color to an inferior moral and legal status relative to whites. This contract gives whites the right to exploit people of color and deny them opportunities that are provided to white people.

The Permanence of Racism

Throughout history, white supremacy has been rampant around the world for centuries and has been achieved through methods like colonization and slavery. White supremacy has had a sizable influence on the history of people of color. When race became a marker that signaled differences in statuses it then gave whites the "right" to enslave Africans and colonize entire countries. Even though these oppressions are well documented historically they still are largely unrecognized and as Mills (1997) puts it, it is accepted as "the way things are" (p.30). The consequences to not reading the social contract as the racial contract means that the Black students like my participants buy into the colorblind, meritocratic ideologies that do not apply to them regardless of how they present themselves or the language they speak. Black students come to spaces that were not made for their blackness. A part of identity is connected to the space that you are from and in turn the space itself is connected to who inhabits it, if that space is a PWI who reflects that space? This relationship is reciprocal and further contributes and reinforces the racial contract. The contract is reinforced through violence and ideological conditioning (Mills, 1997). Once, lynching was used to reinforce the contract, but now Mills argues that capital

punishment is applied differently to a non-white body than a white one. The other way that the racial contract is reinforced is through ideological conditioning. For ideological racism to be effective white people cannot not be the only ones that buy into the idea that Black people are subhuman. A way that this has been done was to embed these ideas into the education of Black children. White privilege allows for white people to deny the existence of the racial contract and hide it under the illusions of colorblindness, meritocratic and neo-liberalism, whereas people of color do not have that privilege. Black people see the contract play into their daily lives, but when the racial contact is applied they are often ignored and silenced. Black students are left with the blame for not using the opportunities they receive to be academically successful.

What can we take from the ideas presented in this chapter, beyond the pseud of "speaking right" is racial realism. From Bell's perspective, discourse about race in U.S. is stalled by the myth that true equality for Black people is within sight. We hold on to the belief that the United States will suddenly move into a social justice and enlightenment phase. Both present and historical times tell a different story, even groundbreaking precedents like Brown v. Board of Education are riddled in inequality. In *Racial Realism*, Bell (1991) makes a point to say that Black people will never gain equality in the United States. The acceptance of this fact is called "Racial Realism". Once the mind-set of racial realism is acquired it will allow Black people to develop racial strategies that counter racism. *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (1992) provides even more clarity to the notion of racial realism. He approaches his theme creatively, through allegory, fables and dialogues with a fictional "lawyer-prophet" a sarcastic, wise Black woman named Geneva Crenshaw, whose role is to challenge and inspire the Bell to confront the truth about race in the U.S.

If we are to extract solutions from the lesson of the slaves' survival, and our own, we must face squarely the unbearable landscape and the climate of survival. We yearn that our civil rights work will be crowned with success, but what we really want -- want even more than success -- is meaning. This engagement and commitment is what Black people have had to do since slavery: making something out of nothing. (Bell, 1995, p.198).

Conclusion

From my participants' perspective, the myth is tempting to believe, but it is limiting and hazardous. It denies Black students the understanding of a truth that is the opposite of meritocracy. Racism is not a passing phase, but a permanent feature of American life. The path is not marked by real progress, but by occasional judicial or legislative victories that serve to conceal the underlying truth about racism. Standard English ideologies perpetuate the myth and AAE speakers are susceptible to entrusting their faith in a system that will never be for them.

Chapter Five: "Writing Teachers are the Worst": Racial and Linguistic Erasure in Composition Courses

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the value of knowledge production and ideologies in Black communities and the capital it holds in academic spaces. In the previous chapter, I discussed the ways in which students understand and practice speaking and writing and how their schooling and personal experiences contribute to the development or hindrance of these particular practices. However, this chapter aims to discuss the ways that writing spaces have been specific spaces where AAE students' practices are explicitly and implicitly erased. The main point of this chapter is to point out the reasons behind this erasure and the distinctive ways that students actively counteract or resist the devaluing of their knowledge, which include speaking and writing practices.

Remediation and its Role in Composition Classrooms

To understand the various types of erasure that AAE students experience in composition classes, the CUNY open admissions policy, college remediation and the standard of college writing are instrumental. These policies and curriculums give insight into the notions that make up ideologies of academic rhetoric and the place of "others'" verbal and written communication in writing classrooms. While the CUNY system is not similar demographically to Midwestern University, CUNY has been a huge influence on research about "basic" writers and many colleges have attempted to model their approach to remediation.

City University of New York (CUNY) is a site among many other university spaces that sparked research about underrepresented students and their college preparedness. CUNY operates as an independent higher education system whose mission is to provide "academic

excellence and to the provision of equal access and opportunity for students, faculty and staff from all ethnic and racial groups and from both sexes" (City of New York, 1997, p. 6).

Open admissions started in 18th century United States, with the passing of the Morrill Act, which assisted states with the financing of land grant institutions. These were institutions were open to state residents who completed high school (Thelin, 2011). They were intended to be spaces where financial and location barriers to attend four-year universities were resolved. About 50 years ago, the open admissions policies became a point of contention in at two-year community colleges. A group of Black and Puerto Rican students demanded (among other things) that the racial composition of entering freshmen to CUNY reflect the proportion of Black and Puerto Rican students in the city's public high schools (City of New York, 1997).

Protesters stated that this CUNY campuses discriminated against minorities and low-income students. Many CUNY campuses shut down in solidarity; administrators expressed concern, and liberal faculty supported student demands; buildings were set on fire; and the police were called in to quash riots. In lieu of the original plan to phase into a four-year system, the administration changed admission standards to open admissions.

Remedial curriculum has a longer history, though the populations have changed. Colleges are spaces of "intellectual rigor". Only the best and brightest are supposed to be admitted into these institutions. With the concepts of open admission, affirmative action and goals of student diversity changing the demographics of universities, many questioned the preparedness of incoming students. Various institutions debated whether to offer remedial courses for the students, mostly low-income students and students of color, coming from high schools did not have the resources to prepare them for college. In providing access, is it the universities responsibility to maintain retention of these students? CUNY implemented a series

of remedial courses that did not count toward the grade point average of the students. Other community colleges like CUNY started to become the "remedial" spaces for students of color. There was controversy among the administration and faculty, many felt remedial courses should not be offered because students should already be "college ready". While the door of access was unlocked, it stills remains closed for many students of color.

While CUNY case was well-known, many other institutions have dealt with the challenge of whether to implement remedial courses and programs designed specifically for the Black and brown students now enrolled in their institutions. The largest remediation was in rhetoric/composition courses. At the institution where my study took place, the implementation of RHET 101 (see chapter three) was "to deal specifically with atypical writing problems arising from inadequate preparation in secondary schools." Approximately 330 SEOP (a program for low-income, first generation and minority students) students enrolled Rhetoric 101, designed by the Division of Freshman Rhetoric to assist disadvantaged students. These rhetoric objectives were the same as the standard freshman rhetoric, but the teaching method differed. Standard rhetoric classes were based on a comparison between individual student writing and professional writing found in textbooks and SEOP rhetoric classes focused on the student's own writing and stressed content rather than form.

The Division of Freshman Rhetoric also created a writing laboratory where tutors assisted students who displayed challenges adjusting to the genre of academic writing. Students had the option to attend the writing laboratory two hours a week and receive one hour of credit for the course. (Williamson, 1999, kindle location 1674). SEOP students received no special grading consideration, and their instructors predicted their success in further rhetoric courses. While many students did not object to being placed in the SEOP rhetoric, a report noted, "They want to

learn what all the other sections are learning, keep up with them, and be expected to produce the same quality of work. Their main concern is that they are being shown favoritism as a precaution against their 'flunking-out'; most students resent this and want to be challenged to find out what their potential actually is." (Williamson, 1999, kindle location 1678). By the end of the first semester, the SEOP rhetoric classes were deemed as a success by both students and instructors. Furthermore, the writing instructors were impressed with the SEOP students' "vitality, enthusiasm … and desire to learn." (Williamson, 1999, kindle location 1678).

Composition courses have long standing history in higher education and is a commonly required course for all students. This is one of the reasons why these classes are a gatekeeper to student success. Rhetoric is defined as the study of persuasion and is an age-old concept that has taken several different forms within cultures internationally. The rhetoric that U.S. students come to learn and rely on is based in Greek philosophy.

Students are not born into rhetoric, but they are also not blank slates waiting to be written on by teachers or other authoritative figures. They also bring with them their own set of rhetorical practices which may or may not be in line with the expectations of higher education institutions. Western rhetorical practices that rely on Standard English are not universal and are certainly not the only type of argumentation. This is not an approach that many composition curriculums take into account when teaching writing. Learning comparative engagement is more useful than learning a monolithic perspective. So, it is useful to explore the political, social and historical conditions that influence these monolithic choices and the consequences for Black bodies that arise when Western rhetorical practices are taught as the "right" rhetoric.

From the perspective of my study there are multiple ways to produce and reinforce racial and linguistic erasure. At times, it is overt and at others it is covert. My intention is to show

complex ways that students are experiencing erasure and the ways in which they understand and ultimately react to this erasure.

Linguistic and Racial Erasure in the Composition Classroom

Who listens to Maya? Maya and a group of four other students are presenting a short presentation about a current event of their choice. The topic of choice is gun violence in Chicago. Before the presentation, the group met in the campus library to plan for the presentation. While most the group wanted to merely focus on gang shootings, Maya argued that gun violence is far more complex: "guns are used by more than gangs, think about unarmed shootings that the police have been a part of". Instantly she is met by disagreement. Billy, a white male identifying student, counters "but… um, it is not what people think. It would be confusing". Maya stares at Billy and argues "isn't this what we're supposed to do? Open minds?" Maya expressed her feelings to me about the meeting. "I feel like I'm sayin' the same thing and they (group members) don't listen. Like, I'm not wrong…" Maya voice wavers, as if she is unsure of her statement.

Despite, the objections of her groupmate, Maya chose to implicate the police as being part of that violence. Like Billy, several white students protested the argument when the class was called on to contribute to the discussion. One student, in particular, consistently challenged Maya's point of view on the subject insisting that the police were not an issue in Black communities. But as Maya tried to defend her point, she was repeatedly interrupted.

As the discussion continues, students express their different opinions on gun violence. Ms. Carmichael (the instructor) in an attempt to lead the students back the use of rhetorical appeal instead of opinion-based answers, asks, "What are your opinions based on?" Anna raises her hand responds "research, we, like, find sources that tell us about it". "Are they all sources

credible?" asks Ms. Carmichael. The majority of the class says "no". Danny shifts the conversation by saying "but what are talking about? If someone breaks the law, they should be punished. That's a fact…" Maya responds "but that don't-uh- doesn't give police a right to kill someone, according to the *Chicago Defender* -, Ms. Carmichael interrupts, "we're running out of time does anybody else have something to add?" Looks at a student, who I later identified as Brie, who folded her arms across her chest and stared back at Ms. Carmichael. Ms. Carmichael's response to the conversation at hand is to use the Socratic method of asking questions to allow students to come to their own ideas. She intervenes by questioning where their views originated, but it is easily dismissed because no one really responds directly to her questions. The students, namely Danny, participating in the conversation were not listening to Ms. Carmichael appeals for "logical" arguments.

There are several arguments that I would like to highlight. The point that Maya is emphasizing is how the media portrays gun violence and does not look beyond the surface of these events. This is quickly disputed by Danny, who has dichotic view of the justice system. Through use of discourse such as "police protect us, they're, like, not violent", Danny conveys his faith in the police and the system. Maya's argument disrupted what Danny knew as truth about violence and the legal system. The clear sighs, eye rolls and the tension between Maya's shoulders implied that she became frustrated with the direction of the conversation. Police brutality against Black communities has been well-documented, sometimes in the form of explicit videos of the police killing unarmed Black citizens. While Maya is attempting to present evidence that supports her arguments, she is challenged by Danny. Danny was attempting to argue that Maya's perspective was illogical, which relies on the notion of logic as being

instrumental to rhetoric and argumentation. Though Danny showed no evidence or logic to support his claims that the police only to protect citizens, not harm them.

As Maya's frustration grew, her group partner, Billy, tried to rephrase Maya's statement in an arguably more palatable way to peers who were uncomfortable with the conversation. While Billy had good intentions, his interruption was dismissive. It also reinforced the idea that if it comes from a white body then other white people might be more accepting of the conversation. Also, Billy explicitly stated in previous classes that "Black Lives Matter", calls out other students who are problematic and sits next the Black students in class. Billy is seen as the "good white person", he recognizes that "whiteness is problematic, a recognition that we [white people] try to escape by being demonstrably different from other, racist whites" (Thompson, 2003, p.9). The idea is that Billy is supporting Maya by toning down her argument, but this act is oppressive in itself. The re-articulation of her words, the interruption when she is speaking and need to make his white peer, Danny, more comfortable in this context enforces the idea that whiteness knows best, even when it comes to Black people's experiences.

While, Ms. Carmichael tried to steer the conversation towards presenting evidence she did not tell Danny outright to show support for arguments that indirectly invalidated Maya's arguments. Maya later exclaims, "If I said something like that, I would have been called out right in front of class. Not that 'maybe kindly reconsider your racism' bullshit". In this instance, Maya felt that Ms. Carmichael was not supportive in this situation with Danny. From Maya's perspective Danny's feelings and comfort was at the expense of Maya's well-being. What does that symbolize to Maya and the other students of color in that classroom? The comfort of white students is more valuable than justice for Black students. Ms. Carmichael did not intend to devalue Maya but that was the outcome. Ms. Carmichael uses multicultural pedagogies that

incorporates the screening of Barack Obama speeches, op-eds about the Dakota Pipeline Protests and the discussion of social identities which implies "simply knowing about Indians, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Latino/as has become a satisfactory form of social and political engagement" (Deloria as cited in Thompson, 2003, p.14). White people are still controlling the level of engagement which does not instill true values of diversity or critical reflections about institutionally embedded white supremacy practices. Situating Ms. Carmichael actions or inaction in case goes further than her classroom, it is institutional. Teachers are taught that treating students equally is enough.

As the conversation continued, Danny still vehemently defends his point that the violence police use is reasonable. Maya responds with "but that don't-uh- doesn't give police a right to kill someone-". There are a few important parts to this statement. The first is that Maya's discourse shifts as she is defending her point. Maya's speech in the classroom is relatively in Standard English, but as tensions arose in the discussion Maya's code shifted. There are many reasons why this language shift would occur. Later in an interview with Maya, I asked if she noticed her change of speech and tone during that discussion. Maya replied. "I was so heated, I didn't think until it slipped out".

The moment when Maya said those words, she did not make eye contact and she bowed her head. While it is not unusual for speakers of multiple languages to revert to native tongue when emotions are high, Maya's body language conveyed that she was disappointed about her perceived slip up in class nonetheless during the middle of a topic that was important to her. Maya continued on to say, "I work hard to be heard and I want others to take me seriously". I asked what makes others take you seriously and Maya said, "it's how you hold yourself and you like have to speak professionally". From Maya's perspective, her shift to AAE in that moment

was unprofessional. As language plays an important role how Maya perceives herself, it is important to point out that the notion of not "taking Maya seriously" was prevalent before Maya's code shift because Maya was continually interrupted and subsequently silenced. The repetition of interruptions indexes to Maya that her opinions are not as important as others, especially since no one else was interrupted like Maya. Like other AAE speaking students, Maya has internalized the unacceptance of her blackness as a failure on her part. Several times Maya tried to assert herself in the discussion, but it was either dismissed or trivialized.

At that moment Maya was not able fully argue her point but refused to be dismissed easily. For her major research paper assignment, she chose to talk about police brutality. To supplement the research paper, she also had to present a speech about the topic, choosing police brutality allowed her to discuss police brutality on her terms. One of those terms was to utilize all Black writers and scholars to support her arguments. Though this was not an effort that was made seamless. One of Maya's references came from The *Chicago Defender*, one of most well-known Black owned and operated newspapers and Maya's teacher inquired on whether "it was a legitimate source". When Maya told me this she expressed:

> I feel like she deliberately trying to undermine my topic. These kids be looking at researchpapers.com and she attempts to call me out? I had to show her that the website (of the newspaper) was credible. Like what did you want to do? White wash my topic? That ain't bouta happen.

Again, Maya's experience and other Black students alike raises questions of who gets to be heard and even then, what students are assumed to be logical without question and who are the students that are considered illogical regardless of evidence-based arguments.

What can we learn from Maya's experience? Her determination to resist, by taking up a topic that is often ignored in predominantly white spaces, the implicit and explicit notions about

her academic ability. This is only one of the ways that students in composition classes are challenging the norms placed upon them.

The power of silence. Brie came into her composition class skeptical of the skills that she was supposed to learn. In fact, Brie is skeptical of being at a PWI. Brie once mentioned:

> "We go to these schools and get out. I don't expect this school to respect me or where I come from. So, when people (other Black students) get their feelings hurt, it won't ever be me. Cause I know. I'm not going to waste my breath fighting for them to see me. I see myself".

Brie's statement is indicative of the racist practices upheld in educational institutions. She believes that the institution does not care about her or other Black students and sees no reason to engage any further than she is required to. In her composition class, Brie best practices this by choosing not to participate in class discussions. In class, they were discussing the 2016 presidential election and the ever-rising controversy of Donald Trump. This particular discussion centered on allegations of sexual assault and the misogynist comments Trump made about women. Anna, a white woman identifying student, exclaimed, "He is disgusting, how can he be running for president?" Becca, another white woman identifying student, chimed in "yeah, we should be doing something to stop this". Other white women in the class echoed the same sentiments but the women of color did not participate in the conversation. Ms. Carmichael noticed this and attempted to remedy the situation by calling on women of color in the class. When she got to Brie, she asked, "Do you have something to add?" and Brie responded with, "No comment". Thinking this was a joke, the class laughed (Brie was not joking). Ms. Carmichael tried again to get Brie to participate but she continually refused until Ms. Carmichael gave up and moved on to another student. Later in an interview, I asked Brie to explain what happened in class:

"You think I didn't know what she was doing? Trying to put me on the spot and doing that women in solidarity bullshit. Now, yall wanna say something? Trump been showing his ass and they was quiet. When we was saying this, people wanna call us angry and loud. Now that it involves them, it's a problem. I refuse overlook that white people constantly overlook us."

Brie makes many important points in the above statement. Black people, especially Black women are rarely considered to be logical and sources of truth. Historically, Black women have been involved in activism and struggles for human rights but have not been given the recognition and subsequently are erased in these narratives. They are especially within institutional spaces. Brie does not see the need to actively engage in spaces that do not acknowledge Black students.

Meanwhile, these types of discussions are controversial and can alienate and further cause vulnerability for marginalized students. The idea that these students should "teach" their peers cultural sensitivity and anti-racist ideas places an undue burden on the students. It is not their responsibility to educate and it essentializes, in this instance, Black student narratives. This is a task that Brie refuses to participate in and her refusal is expressed with her silence. Brie is not alone, other students of color face the dilemma of whether they should be ambassadors of multiculturalism and conversations about inequity. These moments do not always end up being about challenging notions of the norm but become about well-meaning white people. In this case this means well-meaning white teachers, and their desire to be seen as inclusive. It is important to note that Brie is in the same section as Maya and witnessed the interactions Maya had with her classmates and teacher. Distrust has already been established and Brie says, "Don't be asking about what I think, when you let that jackass run all over Maya. You want me to believe you're going to listen to me?" (rolls her eyes as she emphasizes 'me'). The protection of whiteness also emerges in Brie's experiences of her composition class.

What Brie said in response to her teacher also becomes a point of contention. When Brie responded to her teacher with "No comment", she was not taken seriously. Her resistance was interpreted as a joke. The actual event of Brie taking a stance in the classroom is erased by the perception of her actions as a comedic effort, which again places Brie in a certain archetype of a Black student. If Brie experiences and knowledges are recognized, it is stereotypical and does not allow for a complex expression of her experiences. This stereotype plays into the false ideology that Black students are not inclined to be intellectually engaged in school. John McWhorter once stated:

> The sad and simple fact is that while there are some excellent Black students ... on average, Black students do not try as hard as other students. The reason they do not try as hard is not because they are inherently lazy, nor is it because they are stupid... these students belong to a culture infected with an Anti-intellectual strain, which subtly but decisively teaches them from birth not to embrace school-work too whole heartedly (McWhorter, 1999, p.78)

Deficit based approaches to Black students' education is engrained into educational institutions and often influence approaches to teaching Black students. But as we can see, the education of Black students is much more complicated than these superficial perceptions of students' behavior and willingness to learn. A question that may be more informative about Black student experiences is, are white teachers and students willing to listen to the contributions of Black students? On a larger scale, the United States and other institutions has been known for not taking action against injustice unless there is an incentive involved so Brie's resistance to the structure of her composition class and more widely institutions are valid, why would she believe that the institution has her best interests at heart?

If we return to McWhorter's arguments about the socialization of Black students, what risks do the students face when students challenge the, often racist, norms of PWI spaces? I

asked Brie did she worry about the academic consequences of her silence in the classroom. While, Brie may face certain academic consequences, she admits:

> "Sometimes, but I read the syllabus. I'll lose a few points for not participating (says in air quotes) but I do all my other work, her cain't fail me and I wish she would try. I, like, feel that after I leave class others gon be patting themselves on back for being liberal and I'm gon be leaving with my tail between my legs and I don't wanna take that chance"

The price of participation and the price of silence is being weighed. For Brie, the price of silence is more affordable than participating in an environment that does not support her. And from Brie's perspective, her teacher did not attempt to meaningfully engage Brie in the classroom. What are Black students learning when these are messages they receive in the classroom?

The erasure in black exceptionalism. Jerome's experiences in his composition class vary from Maya and Brie. For all intents and purposes, Jerome is considered a "good" student who is an example of what other Black students should be. Brie affectionately and jokingly calls him "baby Obama". To further understand the identity assigned to him, I wanted to understand how Jerome perceived it. Jerome states "I can balance between showing my blackness enough to make others around comfortable and hiding my Blackness enough to make others comfortable. So, to me being baby Obama is a compliment". I asked him to elaborate on what he meant by this statement and he told me, "white people are going to be uncomfortable around you in some way, we can't avoid that…we can show them some part of ourselves without giving them all of ourselves. In CMN, we get to use where come from to talk about stuff we want to talk about". He takes this approach of sharing pieces of himself, especially in his composition class because he feels to an extent that it will be accepted. Which was not the case for Brie and Maya. In comparison to some of his other classes, which consist mainly of business courses, this is true. If we go back to the baby Obama nickname, what does that really mean for how Jerome is seen in composition?

Since his presidency, Obama has become a certain symbol of elite blackness. A part of that blackness was the ability to master Black cultural modes of discourse (communicative competence) was crucial to his being elected at president. Smitherman and Alim (2012) argue language remains commonly unexamined by race and ethnicity, especially in how language plays a role in the construction of racial and ethnic identities. Language has been a site for cultural struggle and it is strong cultural tool that Black people use. President Obama used language to build a sense of communities among Americans while also managing to speak to individuals. Often like other Black orators before him, Obama's language use was embedded in AAE "I do feel that the way that he speaks is particularly African American" (Smitherman and Alim, 2012 p.25). This statement applies to Obama's ways of speaking that were grammatically and syntactically Standard English but rooted in Black cultural practices (rhetoric, intonation, and style). This particular form of style shifting and communicative competence (I would also add racial competence) allowed white people to be more comfortable and not feel alienated by the grammatical and syntactic aspects of AAE (Smitherman and Alim, 2012). Like Obama, Jerome's style-shifting is not only an example of communicative competence, but also shows that style-shifting is anything but neutral. Jerome's ability to give speeches and write essays in ways that were both in AAE (rhetorically) and Standard English (grammar and syntax) makes him academically successful in his composition class. But Jerome rhetorical practices come with a caveat.

After speeches, Jerome's classmates would come up to him after class to talk about how powerful his speeches were. In class, a white student told Jerome that he was "so articulate and had a natural talent". Many students would have taken this as a compliment, and while Jerome was flattered by the statement it also seemed to bother him, "I can't, like, really explain it. What

does it mean to be articulate if you Black?" The only way that white people can make sense of Jerome is through ideologies of exceptionalism. Black exceptionalism is the notion that Black people who are educated, smart, articulate, poised are atypical or rare characteristics among Black communities. The general rule about Black communities is rooted in stereotypical and racist notions of ignorance, laziness, stupidity and criminal behavior. To be successful in his composition class, Jerome must simultaneously fit into and transcend stereotypical race narratives. Frantz Fanon's work (1952) deals with understanding blackness and the myth of exceptionalism, but the internal perils that it creates for Black people:

> Negroes are savages, morons and illiterates. But I knew personally that in my case these assertions were wrong. There was this myth of the Negro that had to be destroyed at all costs. We were no longer in an age when people marveled at the Black priest. We had doctors, teachers and statesmen. OK, there was something unusual about them. We have a Senegalese his teacher. He's very intelligent… Our physician is Black. He's very gentle. If the Negro made one false move, it was over for him and for all those who came after him (p.97).

No matter the position, wealth, or accolades, anti-blackness exists within the ideologies of exceptionalism. Being successful always has to have an explanation, but being exceptional does not only produce false narratives, it can have real consequences for the both the "exceptional" and "unexceptional" Black students. In this case, Jerome shows awareness about the price of exceptionalism and is at times at odds with this classification as shown in his question about "what does it mean to be articulate when you Black?" Because no matter how "articulate" he is or charismatic, he is still Black. Fanon makes a point that this particularly resonates with the impact of exceptionalism in that "My blackness was there dense and undeniable. And it tormented me, pursued me, made me uneasy, and exasperated me" (p.17). The very rhetorical skills and identities that Jerome initially saw as being an asset, also make him question his academic legitimacy.

Similar to other Black students, Jerome is not allowed to be an individual. To be under represented at a PWI is to be represent every member of the groups they belong to. If we think about the Fanon's quote earlier in the chapter, the burdens of being of exceptional can come with the anxiety of failing and disappointing your community. These concerns in addition to the already tense campus climate Black students find themselves understanding and negotiating.

Erasure by perpetuating stigmas and myths. In the focus groups, participants expressed some similar and experiences as Maya, Brie and Jerome in their composition classes:

Angel: *Um, these RHET classes be racist. They (RHET teachers) wanna teach us be these deep thinkers, but they not. They don't listen to us and when we try to talk about real stuff, they blow us off*

Tasha: *Yeah and then they wanna be like this isn't the right grammar. Your point is unclear and don't even be reading what we write*

Dante: *Don't let it be something about race and they really gon stiffen up*

Dominique: *Can y'all give me an example of this?*

Kayla: *When I took RHET, I had this teacher and she got on my nerves so bad! All she did was tell me what I did wrong. AND…one time, we were talking about welfare or something. I said poverty is more complicated one these Matts (not the student's real name but Kayla's refers to white male students as Matts) said to me 'it's not so complicated when you carry those Michael Kors bags, is that a welfare right?'*

(Gasps from several participants)

Angel: *In front of the whole class?*

Kayla: *Yeah and she didn't say nothing, and I mean nothing. After I told her Matt was disrespectful, she said he was giving an example and I shouldn't take it personally. Really? What was we supposed to learn in that? Obviously, so I just stopped going to class, I knew it shouldn't have bother me, but I couldn't stand to look at her after that.*

Kayla absences resulted failing her RHET 105 class and she did not receive a passing grade until the third time she took it, which was with a teacher of color that Kayla said, "was a teacher that didn't make me feel stupid and I actually learned something". Not only did this contribute to a

negative perception about writing, it also placed a financial burden on Kayla because she had to take the class again. It also impacted her grade point average and places her at the risk of not graduating in four years and she may not be eligible for certain academic and professional opportunities because of her failing grades in the composition class.

On the surface, Kayla is perceived as a "bad" student because she just stopped going to class and by not making eye contact and remaining silent when she did attend class she can be perceived by her teachers as "unwilling" or "unable" to learn. Tasha, Dante and Angel point out the negative emotions and experiences that have been associated with their writing classes. Under the rhetoric of college writing are very problematic pedagogies where students of color are unacknowledged and are in hostile classrooms where they are disrespected and challenged about their knowledge. For Tasha, Dante, Angel and Kayla, their composition classes have become uninviting and frustrating spaces, which interfere with the learning outcomes of the compositions classes. Though, not everyone had a negative experience and felt like their writing class was effective in teaching them college writing:

Brian*: I may be in the minority here, but I liked my writing teacher (he took RHET 101 and 102). My high school didn't teach me how to write so I came in with no idea of proper grammar, I barely knew anything.*

Dominique: *What do you mean by proper English?*

Brian: *You know like, not using ain't and proper grammar.*

It is important to note that Brian's notions of proper English and ultimately what is a good writer are based in grammatical choices. In writing studies literature, the best practices surrounding teaching of writing do not actually emphasize sentence level aspects of writing such as grammar. Research has shown that a knowledge of grammatical and usages of Standard English does not significantly contribute to learning to grow as a writer. Knowledge of these things can and does

improve the mastery of writing, but it does not precede the proper use of it. Scholarship has shown that "instruction in formal grammar has little or no effect on the quality of [L1] student composition" (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, & Schoer, 1963, p. 37). Indeed, researchers found that the teaching of formal grammar may even be detrimental to student learning "because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition" (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, & Schoer, 1963, p. 37-38). A decade later, Shaughnessy (1977) studied the errors of basic writers at the CUNY and, in response to the public representation of basic writers as "illogical, incapable, or uneducable" students (p. 3), determined that mistakes basic writers make are not random or illogical (p. 5) but based on the writer's language background and level of language learning (p. 10-11).

What actually helps writers develop their skills? Wardle (2007) studied the writing practices of college students throughout their time at college. She found that in general, "students did not perceive a need to adopt or adapt most of the writing behaviors they used in first year composition classes. Students tended not to use the strategies even when they knew they could have benefited from doing so" (p. 76). Based on this finding, Wardle argues that students need to cultivate "meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies" (p. 82).

Building on this premise, students may learn to write differently but not necessarily "better," Furthermore, Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz's (2004) longitudinal study of Harvard students revealed that freshmen writers tend to show a "gap between what a student knows about writing and what the student can actually do", particularly when asked to perform new tasks or adopt new methods (p. 144). They also point to the importance of students' learning dispositions as a crucial factor in writing development, finding that the most successful students were those who perceived themselves as novices in the university (and therefore open to experimenting and

adapting to new ideas and modes of learning) and who were able to discover personal investment not only in the topics they wrote about, but also in the analytic perspectives offered by academic writing. I would argue that Brian really learned prescriptive aspects of writing that are not based in scholarly research produced about teaching and learning how to write. Additionally, these methods of teaching writing that my participants experienced did not contribute them learning about writing in productive ways.

Challenging erasure in the writing classroom. Furthermore, the 1st focus group also discuss the ways they deal with the complexities of racial and linguistic erasure and similar issues were brought up:

Jamie: *We trying to figure college and you have to learn how to deal with-*

Diane: *You don't just have to take it*

Deanna: *Yeah but you do have to talk like you got some sense*

Patricia: We make sense, they just don't wanna hear us

Tiffany: *But we gotta be mindful, I look at people and if I see faces turned up so we gotta learn to balance, nonverbal communication facial expressions gestures. And don't raise your voice, talk to them like they talk to you*

Andre: *Yeah passive aggressive*

(everybody laughs)

Diana: *One time this dude was talking to me like I was straight slow and like I couldn't comprehend, and I talked to him right back and his face got so red. White people say some crazy stuff and you have to be ready*

Bianca: *I mean, it's stressful to be in class and you gotta have a place where you're more comfortable and don't have to do all this shit*

Dominique*: Like where?*

Bianca: *I remember one time, my teacher started talking about how blue lives matter and I straight just got up and left the class*

Jamie: *you didn't get in trouble?*

Bianca*: What was he gon' do? Stop me?*

Deanna: *I feel like you need to be around whites so you know how to deal with them and know all the craziness now, you won't mess and get fired for going off. You got to have tolerance*

Diana: *They say stuff they don't think about*

Students are facing the same dilemmas of having to deal with racist practices and erasures. Similar to Kayla, Bianca left her class when the instructor started talking about subjects in a way that was violent to her but did not have the space to discuss her concerns in a safe way. Tiffany and Diana share the ways that they have to be mindful about how white people perceive them and act accordingly in ways that white people understand. The participants are showing the ways that they deal with these racially charged spaces. Using racial communicative competence, they all made decisions that help them get through the hostile space of this PWI.

I argue that all of the participants' experiences are forms of erasure, even Brian's positive experience in his composition class because it is reinforcing outdated and unhelpful writing practices that further devalue students' language, writing repertoires and rhetorical skills that are not rooted in Standard English practices.

The Policing of Black Bodies and Whiteness as Property in the Composition Classroom

Composition classrooms are spaces that police Black bodies through language and writing. Institutionally constructed spaces were not made for Black bodies and this brings up notions of property and who these PWI spaces belong to. Notions of property account for the power relations and inequities that are present when we think about what whiteness allows students to do in campus spaces. It involves both the right to exclude and the right not to be excluded. Whiteness is a:

> Resource deployable at the social, political, and institutional level to maintain control. Thus, a white person "used and enjoyed" whiteness whenever she took advantage of the privileges afforded to white people simply **by** virtue of their whiteness - when she exercised any number of rights reserved for the holders of white-ness. Whiteness as the embodiment of white privilege transcended mere belief or preference; it became usable property, the subject of the law's regard and protection. In this respect whiteness, as an active property, has been used and enjoyed (Harris, 1993, p.1734).

Institutions of higher learning are often constructed with the purpose of giving White students access to education while reinforcing white supremacy values. The access to higher education is normalized and understood as a predominantly white possession (Kynard, 2013). When Black students enter these spaces, they have to carefully navigate, or they would risk failure. This is considered to be cultural rules for racially marginalized groups to follow in the effort to be viewed as an "individual human" in a White supremacist society and by individual whites. Some of the most noticeable manifestations of the politics of respectability occur among African Americans because of the historical dehumanization and devaluing of Black bodies. Students of color that attend PWIs have been monitored and policed in ways that white students are not. Throughout this chapter, white students have been illogical and inappropriate in their composition classes and this went unacknowledged, while Black students have been put on trial and made to feel like they do not belong and are ignorant**.** The participants' experiences show that whiteness gives certain students access and a right to the space that Black students do not have. In this case, whiteness working as an inherited form of property and like the law:

> Institutions draws boundaries and enforces or reorders existing regimes of power. The inequalities that are produced and reproduced are not givens or inevitabilities, but rather are conscious selections regarding the structuring of social relations. In this sense, it is contended that property rights and interests are not "natural," but are "creation[s] of law (Harris, 1993, p. 1707).

As shown in the situation with Kayla, if white students speak a way that is deemed incompetent they do not face the same repercussions that the Black students would. If the participants did not learn the language and customs of the mainstream, they believe that they would succeed in

college, but white students can be oblivious to linguistic and cultural practices of students of color and there would not be extreme consequences. For decades institutions of higher education have attempted regulate and control Black bodies, even historically Black institutions:

> Much of the student protest in the 1920s was initially launched at the way many Black colleges held on to strict dress and behavior codes in the 1920s. Students questioned these politics as ones that rested more on racist thinking than with concern for their education. They were, however, attacking more than dress code. They were attacking the underlying belief that Blacks could not control their sexual appetites and needed rules for demureness because, if allowed to exercise full liberty, they would be too savage (Kynard, 2013, p.27).

Black bodies were branded as uncivilized and wild and the only ways that Black students were accepted in post-secondary institutions were to become "respectable". Black students have been actively resisting the regulations of their bodies and language for decades. In this case, the students are highly aware of their precarious status in college spaces, but what are the ways that these participants resist these rules? Many of the participants are reimagining the space and resist the boundaries placed upon them in part is by utilizing AAE, asking questions, talking about Black issues in their research papers and resisting through silence in campus settings. The action of using a language in a space that has been categorized as improper is resistance in itself. The participants have shown why they white students are held to a different Standard than Black students. But why? The conceptualization of property includes exclusive rights of use, disposition and possession, which can become a tactic to exclude others. Harris (1993) would argue:

> Whiteness has been characterized, not by an inherent unifying characteristic, but by the exclusion of others deemed to be "not white." The possessors of whiteness were granted the legal right to exclude others from the privileges inhering in whiteness; whiteness became an exclusive club whose membership was closely and grudgingly guarded. The courts played an active role in enforcing this right to exclude - determining who was or was not white enough to enjoy the privileges accompanying whiteness. In that sense, the courts protected whiteness as any other form of property (p.1728).

Ownership of whiteness is working as a form of protection for the white students; it is an asset that Black students will never have access to. The participants' experiences have taught them that their identities are always being constituted and reconstituted through social interactions. How they are perceived is tied to their socially mobility. The ascribed political, economic, and social subordination of Blacks, including the language spoken by them are constantly being shaped by Whiteness (Harris, 1993).

Conclusion

The erasure of Black AAE students discussed in this chapter all have a connection to Harris' notion of whiteness as property. The hegemony of whiteness affects all marginalized groups because as whiteness increases in value, other cultures will continue to be devalued and oppressed. Biklen and Casella (2007), argue that the narrator can gain authority through their rhetoric. By rhetoric, we mean "the putting to work of language in order to influence other people, either in terms of their future actions or their beliefs. Tropes, figures of speech are part of a writer's rhetorical skills (p.23). AAE speakers have rhetoric that is consistently undervalued and ignored. How can students become agents of their writing when they are constantly told in several different ways that their Blackness is deviant?

Chapter Six: "They Say, I Say; You Mean White People Say and We 'Posed to Obey": Assimilation into PWI Spaces

Introduction

In the finding chapters presented in this dissertation, I have attempted to show how AAE speaking students understand their position on college campuses and specifically how writing classrooms play a role in reinforcing institutional racism and how Black students negotiate these overt and covert oppressive pedagogies. As a teacher, adviser, administrator and student, I have worked to challenge the practices that lead to the erasure of AAE speaking students and myself. In whatever role I occupy, I work to create a safe enough space that is critical, inclusive and encompasses students' experiences, opinions, and knowledges. My goal in this research was to get an inside view of the students' perspective and work to describe the ways that they experience this university through race, language and writing and present it as they were told to me (Emerson, et al., 1995). It was not my intention to evaluate the students or teachers nor critique my participants' viewpoints as expressed to me through interviews, informal conversations, observations and focus groups.

I decided to pursue this project because I am frustrated with the ways that AAE speakers and Black students' experience in writing spaces and their racially charged encounters with others on campus. The things that students shared with me over the years were rarely positive; students' experiences, as expressed in this study, show how practices and policies have actively worked against them. The vignette, which I included in chapter one, showed students' clear frustration and tension with the way their composition classes were taught. I wanted to investigate a situation where AAE and race were at the forefront of conversations about Black students' ability to write, perceived and otherwise.

In the age of color-blind racism and post- racial societies, it is valuable to continue to focus on the ways that institutional racism is reinforced. Language use and writing have been historically used as gatekeeping and oppressive methods to continually marginalize students of color, especially Black students. In this chapter. I will first summarize my key findings, which are separated into two main themes: Black students' relationship with AAE and how that manifests in the classroom and racial and linguistic erasure in writing spaces. Then I will discuss implications of this research, limitations, and finally directions for possible future research.

Summary of Findings

Throughout this entire research process (forming my questions, collecting my data writing field notes, analyzing, and writing the dissertation), I have tried to be very conscious of my own perspectives while I strive to center the students' narratives, I do not wish to overshadow their voice with my own perspective about AAE speaking students' navigation of composition. I tried to be open-minded in my pursuit of exploring my phenomenon. As I spent time in the field with my participants, I realized the multitude of ways that students challenge practices that do not benefit them and make a space for themselves on campus. Students have been active agents in their writing and language use and that should not be ignored. My participants made meaning out of their experiences and the following summary of main points is how I understood them.

The first theme, as presented in chapter four, delves into how the participants of this study experience and understand the dialect of AAE. An essential part of this study was to develop an understanding of the participants' knowledge about their language repertoires and how these repertoires in turn are perceived in various spaces. Then, with the scholarship of

Langston Hughes, Derrick Bell and Charles Mills, I considered how race plays into these perceptions and the false premise of Standard English as social mobility for Black AAE speaking students.

The second theme, as presented in chapter five, explores the role that composition classes play in AAE speakers' development of an understanding of how their language and writing practices are perceived by others. Furthermore, I argue that when the students understand how they are perceived racially, rhetorically and linguistically in these spaces they can then construct and implement strategies that resist the mainstream narratives about language and writing, narratives that often exclude them. Harris' whiteness as property is used explore notions of race and language in the composition classroom. Throughout this dissertation, I argued that my focal participants, along with the other participants have an acute and varying awareness about the role that race plays in others' perceptions of their linguistic and writing abilities.

Discussion of Findings

Researchers have revisited language variation and education, especially AAE and several scholars have reiterated the need for teaching practices that challenge perspectives about AAE speaking students and value of students' cultures (Smitherman, 1973; Smitherman & Alim, 2014; Kynard, 2013; Royster & Williams, 1999; Delpit, 1999). My research documents students' perceptions of their place in the classroom and practices they enact to challenge the preconceived notions that have been produced and reinforced by PWIs. One aspect of understanding these students' perceptions is by critically applying race theory such as CRT to connect these students' experiences to the institutional racism of PWIs. What I mean by this statement is that after the Civil Rights Movement people believed that U.S. had overcome its race problems (Omi & Winant, 1994). And because the U.S. had a Black president, the U.S. is viewed as a post-racial society, overcoming the consequences the racism. The race problems that the U.S. faces does not

disappear overnight after centuries of explicit racist rhetorics, practices, policies and state sanctioned violence that have built American society (Omi & Winant, 1994 ; Bell, 1992). A critique of language and writing ideologies are a way to show that the paradigms used when talking about race are not representative of "race as an autonomous field of social conflict, political organization and cultural/ideological meaning" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p.48). Race work such as CRT acknowledges the role that social structure plays in the oppressive practices of composition classes. Racism, and dominant language ideologies are not a pathogen that plagues our society, instead they are deeply ingrained.

The speech and/or writing curriculum that my participants engaged in often pushed "critical thinking" as a learning outcome and social justice awareness were topics in their classes, but antiracist rhetoric in the United States has always come with an ulterior motive (Bell, 2004; Melamed 2011). Melamed notes "racial liberalism, the first official U.S. racism, achieved this through a framework that conceived racism as prejudice and promised to release liberal freedoms from racial restrictions by extending by extending equal opportunity, possessive individualism and cultural citizenship to African-Americans" (Melamed, 2011, p.9).

Liberalism operates under the guise that everyone is free and that nothing stands in the way of mobility. Liberalism has generally been seen as an ideology of individual rights and freedoms. According to Melamed, the ideologies that are foundational in spaces like the U.S. are democracy, nationalism, and multiculturalism. They are also essential to the development of racial capitalism and work to reinforce it. Institutions like the state and university are used as tools to strengthen the ideals of racial capitalism. These spaces work to provide new discourses that disguise the political system of white supremacy. Education has been perceived as a form of social mobility, the accumulation of degrees operates as a form of capital. Ferguson exposes

higher education institutions' exclusionary practices even under the guise of liberalism. We can see this in the ways that Ferguson (2012) explores the genealogy of excellence. Using veiled terms such as "excellence" and "standards" seemingly moves away from racialized pathologies of students of color and move toward a meritocratic ideology. Black students' aim towards excellence translates to assimilating to mainstream white American culture and leaving their "pathologized" cultures behind for the dream of social mobility. What happens when students strive for excellence in the ways that universities define and still find themselves continuously excluded? We have seen that in this study an education, as defined by a white dominant narrative, does not save students from the physical, psychological and emotional violence of a white supremacy state. Liberalism, the illusion that the current state operates under, is the idea of struggle for liberation and the right to be valued as human beings. The idea liberalism implies any issues that Black students face is the problem of the individual and not a problem resulting from racism and therefore not the problem of the state or institution. Similar to assimilationist views, Black students needed to adapt to white social norms and if they failed, the blame is placed on marginalized students.

For many participants, complex notions of their language use impacted their relationships with their teachers and the idea of their abilities and knowledges in writing spaces. It also showed that participants understood racial dynamics enough to strategically style shift in ways that caused the least amount of turmoil for them. This ethnographic work documents not only the embedded racist practices in speaking and writing, but also documents the ways that AAE speaking students understand these practices. In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon (1952) mentions the false notions that Black people have "no culture, no civilization, and no long historical past. Perhaps that is why today's [B]lacks want desperately to prove to the white world

the existence of [B]lack civilization" (p.17). I would build on this notion by stating that there has been research to legitimatize AAE and Black rhetorical practices, but I would argue that it is not solely produced for white consumption. For instance, Brie's blatant decision to be silent when she perceives that she will not be equally heard or represented in her classes. Other participants also recognize and value their Black cultural practices in ways that do not include white people's acceptance of their Black linguistic and cultural identity. I would argue in the same vein that this work is not for the consumption of white students, scholars or teachers, but for Black ones. This work is not a plea to acknowledge Black students as human, this work is for Black students, scholars and teachers to have own perspectives, challenges of white supremacy and survival on record. It is for us to see the complex relationships that we have with institutions and that our perceived failures in these spaces are not a fault of our own but lies within the institution.

As I previously mentioned, racism plays a large role in how AAE speakers are perceived. Alim and Smitherman (2012) argue "we need to language race – in order to move the national conversation forward" (p. 169). Language and race do not operate separately and there is a need to think critically about the racialization of language and the structural racism behind it. Every finding discussed in the document somehow comes back to race. Many of the descriptions and insights that the participants had speak to larger societal and institutional implications that reinforce the racialization of language. Situating racial communicative competence allows us to look deeper into the participants' language experiences and its place on college campuses.

How do AAE speakers negotiate college spaces? That answer in complex. All of the participants use Standard English and AAE in different ways that allows them to navigate college in ways that allow them to remain in this space. On one hand, they feel that they have to limit their AAE use or make their blackness more palatable in classroom settings in order to

perform well in school and it can be a very complicated negotiation because they still actively style shift throughout various spaces on campus. Even though some participants refer to AAE as improper it still is of value to them. The power of AAE is often underrated. If AAE were not useful to them they would not continue to use it. In educational spaces, communities of color's knowledges are disregarded (Yosso, 2006). The capital that is valued is white, middle/ upper class knowledge. Yosso takes traditional Bourdieu theorizations of cultural capital and expands it by using critical race theory (CRT) she calls it community cultural wealth. Similar to Woolard's critique of Bourdieu, which argues "such linguistic domination does not stand unopposed" (Gal, 1987, p. 638).

Bourdieu's original theory of cultural capital is criticized because his work had been traditionally used to place white, middle class culture as the standard and all other cultures are judged in relation to the standard and considered inferior. Yosso posits that there are forms of cultural capital that marginalized students hold and CRT's cultural common wealth acknowledges that. By rethinking cultural capital, it allows for the focus to shift from white middle-class communities to the stories about communities of color. There are six forms of capital (aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, linguistic, which are mainly discussed, and they can all intersect in some way (Yosso, 2006). The relevance of this theory to this case is that it provides a specific racial lens to look at linguistic capital. Linguistic capital reflects the idea that Black students come to school with multiple language and communication skills that contribute to the development of intellectual and social skills. Acknowledging that students have linguistic cultural capital can ultimately be powerful for the students that speak AAE.

The study has shown that understanding language relies heavily on the social context of

the situation and current underlying institutional policies. The language that is predominantly spoken within a speech community has significant power within its own right and it seems as if institutions of schooling reduce that power by ignoring or punishing these rhetoric and languages

In the focus groups, the popular text that is used for this campus's RHET classes is the text, *The Say, I Say* is brought into the discussion. Angel asked the group, "I don't get it, who is they? "(the group laughs). "No, for real though, who is they?" In honor of Angel's insight question, I named titled this chapter: "They say, I say. You mean white people say and we 'posed to obey. Earlier in this dissertation, I talked about communicative competence and the underlying social rules that students are supposed to learn to be "successful" in school spaces. I asked, who decides the rules of a particular space and while communicative competence cannot answer this question on its own, CRT breaks down the "norm" of social spaces and recognizes that the norm is actually socially constructed. This leaves us with racial communicative competence.

The racism and linguistic prejudice that Black students experience on campus and in other spaces are deeply rooted into our lives and experiences. And while the value of an education can have a practical outcome of preparing someone for employment, PWI's can contribute to students' linguistic and racial identity problems (Smitherman, 1977). To an extent, AAE speakers will not have access to campus in the ways that white students do. The participants are aware that changing behavioral and linguistic practices will only allow them to achieve a certain level of mobility. PWI's can be oppressive and psychologically damaging to Black students. So, when writing spaces leave out Black student voices, Black students do not always obey instead they challenge the norms that are imposed on them in the classroom.

Implications

Throughout this paper, I have shown that there is a lack of discourse about language, specifically when it comes to AAE. The white supremacy values that PWI spaces are built upon create very real consequences for Black students. Though the participants show varying levels of awareness about their AAE linguistic and rhetorical practices, there is still a lack of knowledge surrounding language varieties. This is problematic because where there are no other stories to counter dominant stories, which often have violent ideologies, it reinforces false language ideologies. The participants speak a language and have a rhetoric that they often do not know much about, how does that affect how they view themselves and their language, especially in the context of school? Would their negotiation of college space change if they had the opportunity to learn more about AAE?

Another question that came out of this project for me is not only who gets to define the social norms/rules that define communicative competence but who gets to define ideas of a "good speaker" or a "good writer"? How do we as scholars and teachers truly develop a learning space that is truly inclusive for Black students? Researchers, like Ladson-Billings have defined culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995), but what does it look like to teach writing to Black students, while valuing who they are and where they come from? I came into this project knowing that many Black students were having negative experiences in writing classrooms, but I did not really know how negative it would be. Often times, when I discuss my research I am continuously questioned about how to fix the problem. This is the question that I ask myself every day. Is some form of assimilation a way to be successful in college? What this project has taught me is that it is not as simple as we have been taught to believe, but racial communicative competence is a framework that is helpful in uncovering myths about

meritocracy, assimilation and racism, language and writing. This project made me question the training of composition teachers and their knowledge about teaching writing, especially to diverse populations of students.

Limitations

Qualitative research is not meant to be applied universally or be generalizable. I am not looking to produce one narrative about AAE speakers and their experiences in composition classes or PWIs. What I am aiming to do is add a counter-story to a body of scholarship that looks at this from a perspective that does not focus on the systematic racism of PWIs, which inevitably seep into composition classrooms.

I have done my best as a human researcher, who is subjective, to present the students' experiences as authentically as I can while providing an in-depth analysis of the data I collected. As I have said before language and race as complex. I have worked to try and reveal these complexities in a way that moves past notions of a "good" writer and narrow understandings of language variations that are not rooted in a socio-historical context. There is no doubt that the complexity of my role at this PWI is also a limitation. While I was not a complete insider at my research site, I do, however, have many connections to this particular PWI as a grad student, teacher, adviser and administrator, which made it difficult for students to fully share with me.

Language is fundamentally reflexive (Lucy, 1993). In every language, it is possible to speak about speech. So, it is possible to use language to communicate about the activity of using language. The study of reflexive language is important because it can play a role in how language functions in real life contexts. Lucy argues that understanding "reflexive language is essential to the methodological rigor in the human disciplines, and indeed scholarly activity"

(p.22). In recent years, there has been a concern with the limits of natives' awareness of their own language and its value in language research. Silverstein argues that it is "difficult if not impossible for native speakers of a language to take account of those aspects of speech as social action that they have ability to describe for use in their own meta language, that is, which they do not have ready terms of expression for" (p.25). This project's goal was to explore the participants' linguistic experiences and awareness from their perspective. Again, it brings to question, what do we really know about the language that we speak? And is it important to know? In this case we can see that the participants have different kinds of linguistic awareness but are not always fully aware of their meta-pragmatic practices.

I observed three focal participants, but I would have liked to expand my observation of those participants to other class spaces that have a writing component to compare their practices across their courses. It also would have been more fruitful to observe more interactions outside of the writing classroom. Observing more students to get a comprehensive understanding of their reported perspectives and experiences would have added more context to the focus group conversations. Additionally, my participants were mostly female and the few male participants that I did have had different experiences than my female participants. Questions arose for me about the gender aspects of language variation and writing (i.e. Jerome in contrast to Maya and Brie) and I did not explore the gender aspects that were clearly developing in my study. Questions that I did not answer were: where do Black women fit into the picture (Crenshaw, 1989)? And what does it look like we approach understand language and rhetorical practices from the stand point of Black women?

Another limitation is that I only observed one type of composition class (CMN 111-112) when they are different types of composition classes that my non-focal participants took.

Excluding the focal participants, I believe that many of the participants attended the focus groups because they had extremely positive or negative reactions to their composition class, which may have biased the data collection in the focus groups.

Directions for Future Research

This study provides an important look how AAE speakers think about their language practices. Research that further investigates how AAE speakers navigate college spaces and how they perceive language is needed to get a better understanding of student's linguistic and pedagogical needs in school settings**.** This research supports that language practices, behaviors and attitudes are complex; they are fluid and change as the social context changes. To truly attempt to learn about my case, the perspectives of the participants and how they negotiate meaning were essential. Not only are the perspectives important, we also need to push for the use theoretical frameworks that are useful in analyzing these perspectives. These theoretical frameworks can be used to expose not only inequities in composition classrooms but highlight the ways AAE speaking students are challenging monolithic approaches to speaking and writing.

The goal of this project was not to focus teachers understanding of AAE and Black rhetorical practices or their pedagogies. For future research, I would like to conduct an ethnographic study about teachers' perceptions of multi-lingual and multi-dialectal students and ways that they engage in critical pedagogies to cultivate effective and informed writers. Additionally, how can we as teachers and administrators change how we see the knowledge of traditionally margined students and turn these oppressive practices into pedagogical opportunities.

Conclusion

I cannot emphasize enough how the complexity of the participants' understandings and actions in this study. I hope this study shows the racial communicative competence that underlies the strategic silences, style shifting and space-making of the participants. Issues of race, power, authority are always present in PWI spaces, which means that negotiating them a part of student's academic experience. Derrick Bell's aptly explains this in that:

> We wish fervently to believe that America was founded on and has lived by the ideals of social justice. In that effort, we expend great amounts of psychological energy trying to ignore a national history of eager exploitation of those on the bottom- no matter who they are (Bell, 2002, p.7).

In order to give students the educational access they deserve, we can no longer ignore that the United States and, by association, PWIs are not inherently spaces of social justice. They are spaces that have produced and reinforced oppressive practices that impact Black students. This study is not just about Standard English and the praxis that enforces monolithic approaches to writing it also shows that Standard English has been used as a form superficial capital to reinforce the real capital of white supremacy. Until we start to deal with the permanence of racism in our college classrooms, we cannot truly teach our students.

References

Adler-Kassner, L., & Wardle, E. (Eds.). (2015). *Naming what we know: Threshold concepts of writing studies*. Boulder, CO: Univ. Press of Colorado.

Ahearn, L.M. (2012). *Living language: An Introduction to linguistic anthropology*. Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, MA.

Alim, H. S. & Baugh J. (2007). *Talkin Black Talk: Language, Education, and Social Change*. New York: Teachers College.

Alim, S. & Smitherman, G. (2012). Articulate while Black: Barack Obama, language, race in the U.S. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Allen-Castillito, A.L. & Maillard, K. (2001). Student and faculty perspectives on Black Americans success in the white academy. *Negro Educational Review*, 52 (3), 89-99.

Balester, V.M. (1993). Cultural divide: A study of African American college level writers. Portsmuth, NH: Boynton/Cook

Baugh, J. (2000). *Beyond ebonics: Linguistic pride and racial prejudice* Oxford University Press, Bourdieu, P. (1999/1991). "Language and Symbolic Power" in The Discourse Reader. A. Jaworski and N. Coupland, eds. London, Routledge: 502-513.

Beaufort, A. (2007). *College writing and beyond: A new framework for university writing instruction*. Logan, UT: Utah State Univ. Press.

Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York: Basic Books.

Bell, D. (1992). *And we are not saved: The elusive quest for racial justice.* New York: Basic Books.

Bell, D.A. (1999) The power of narrative. *Legal Studies Forum, 23*, 315–348.

Bell, D.A. (2002). Ethical Ambition: Living a life of meaning and worth. Bloomsbury: New York, New York

Bell, D. (2004). *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U

Bonilla-Silva, E. (1997). Rethinking racism: Toward a structural interpretation. *American Sociological Review*, 62(3), 465-480.

Bourdieu, P., & Thompson, J. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Cazden, C.B. (2001). Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Center for New American Media by Andrew Kolker and Louis Alvarez. (1987). *American tongues*. New York, N.Y.: The Center USA.

Conference on College Composition and Communication. (1974). *Students' right to their own language*. Retrieved from: http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Groups/CCCC/NewSRTOL.pdf

Crenshaw, K. (1988). Race, retrenchment and reform: Transformation and legitimation in anti-discrimination law. *Harvard Law Review, 101*(7), 1331-1387.

Clayton, D. M. (2014). The negotiation of language in college settings (Unpublished master's

thesis). University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Illinois.

Cohen, Cathy J. (1999). *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*. Chicago: U of Chicago.

Coleman, J. S., United States, & National Center for Education Statistics. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity* (OE, 38001; OE, 38001 (suppl.); OE (Series) (United States. Office of Education), 38001; OE (Series) (United States. Office of Education), 38001 (suppl.)). Washington: U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education; for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Govt.

CUNY Student Data Book. (1997). *Beyond Graduation Rates.* Vol. II, p.6-49.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). Critical Race Theory: An introduction. New York: New York University Press.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. New York: New York.

Delpit, L. (2008). *The skin that we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom* New Pr.

Dixson, A.D. & Rousseau, C.K. (Eds.). (2006). *Critical Race Theory in education: All God's children got a song*. New York: Routledge.

Dyson, A. H., & Genishi, C. (2005). *On the case: Approaches to language and literacy research.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Fanon, F. (1952) Black skins, white masks. Grove Press: New York, New York

Ferguson, R. A. (2012). The reorder of things: the university and its pedagogies of minority difference, Difference incorporated. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Ch. 3

Fisher, M.T. (2009). *Black Literate Lives: Historical and Contemporary Perspecti*ves. New York: Routledge.

Freeman, E. B. (1982). The Ann Arbor decision: The importance of teachers' attitudes toward language. *The Elementary School Journal*, 121-132.

Gal, S. (1989). Language and Political Economy. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18: 345-367.

Gasman, M. (2007). "Swept Under the Rug: A Historiography of Gender and Black Colleges." *American Educational Research Journal* 44, no. 4: 760-805.

Gilyard, K. (1996) *Let's flip the script: An African American discourse on language, literature, and learning*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Godley, A. J., Sweetland, J., Wheeler, R. S., Minnici, A., & Carpenter, B. D. (2006). Preparing teachers for dialectally diverse classrooms. *Educational Researcher, 35*(8), 30.

Goodman, Y. M. (1967) A psycholinguistic description of observed oral reading phenomena in selected young beginning readers. *Unpublished doctoral dissertation*, Wayne State University.

Grier-Reed, T. L. (2010). The African American student network: Creating sanctuaries and counter-spaces for coping with racial micro-aggressions in higher education settings. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development*, 49(2), 181-188.

Gusa, D. L. (2010). White institutional presence: The impact of Whiteness on campus climate. *Harvard Educational Review*, 80(4), 464-490.

Hamlet, J.D. (2011). Word! The African-American oral tradition and its rhetorical impact on American popular culture. *Black History Bulletin, 74* (1), 27-31.

Harper, S. R., Patton, L. D., & Wooden, O. S. (2009). Access and equity for African American students in higher education: A critical race historical analysis of policy efforts. *Journal of Higher Education,* 80(4), 389-414.

Heath, S. B... *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983. Print.

Heath, S. B. & Street, B. V. (2008). *On ethnography: Approaches to language and literacy research*. New York: Teachers College.

Helmers, M. (1994). *Writing students: Composition, testimonials, and representations of students* (SUNY series, literacy, culture, and learning). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Herrnstein, R. J. & Murray, C.A. (1994). *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. New York: Free Press

Hill, J. H. (1998). Language, race, and white public space. *American Anthropologist,* 680-689.

Hudley, A. H. & Mallinson, C. (2011). *Understanding English language variation in U.S. schools.* Teachers College Press.

Hymes, D.H. (1971). *On Communicative Competence*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA.

Hymes, D. H. (1989) 'Ways of speaking', in R. Bauman and J. Sherzer (eds.) Explorations in the ethnography of speaking. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 433-51.

Johnson-Ahorlu, R. N. (2012). The academic opportunity gap: How racism and stereotypes

disrupt the education of African American undergraduates. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 15(5), 633-652.

Joiner, C. W. (1979). Memorandum opinion and order, 473 F.

Kopano, B.N. (2002). Rap music as an extension of the Black rhetorical tradition: "Keepin' it real' *Western Journal of Black Studies, 26*(4), 204-216

Kroskity, P. (2001). Identity. In Duranti (ed), Key terms in language and culture (pp.106-109)

Kynard, C. (2013). *Vernacular Insurrections Race, Black Protest, and the New Century in Composition-literacies Studies*. Albany, NY: State U of New York.

Labov, W. (1970) The Study of Language in Its Social. Stadium Generale, 23, 30-87.

Labov, W. (1969). The Logic of Non-Standard English. *Georgetown Monographs on Language and Linguistics*. (22), p. 179-215.

Labov, W. (1982). Objectivity and commitment in linguistic science: The case of the Black English trial in Ann Arbor. *Language in Society, 11*(02), 165-201.

Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47-68.

Matsuda, M. (1987). Looking to the bottom: critical legal studies and reparations, Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review, 22, 323-399.

Marquez, J. & Rana J. (2015). Introduction: On Our Genesis and Future. *Critical Ethnic Studies*. 1(1): 1-8.

Melamed, J. (2015). Racial Capitalism. *Critical Ethnic Studies*. 1(1).

Melamed, J. (2011) *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota.

Mendoza-Denton, N. (2008). *Homegirls: Language and cultural practice among Latina youth gangs*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

McWhorter, J. (2000). *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America.* New York: Free Press.

Morgan, M. (2001). The African American speech community: Reality and Sociolinguists1. *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*, *1*, 74.

Moynihan, D. P. (2003). The Negro Family: The Case for National Action. *Welfare*. New York: New York UP, pp. 226-38.

Myrdal, G. (1996). *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996.

Omi, M. and Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formations in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s.* New York: Routledge.

Oropeza, M. V., Vargese, M. M., & Kanno, Y. (2010). Linguistic minorities students in higher education: Using, resisting, and negotiating multiple labels. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 43(2), 216-231.

Perry, T., & Delpit, L. D. (1998). *The real ebonics debate: Power, language, and the education of African-American children* Beacon Pr.

Piestrup, A. (1973). *Black dialect interference and accommodation of reading instruction in first*

grade. Berkeley: University of California, Language-Behavior Research Laboratory.

Prendergast, C. (2003). *Literacy and racial justice: The politics of learning after brown v. board of education*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Richardson, E. B. (2003) *African American literacies*. London: Routledge.

Rickford, J. R. (1999). *African American vernacular English: Features, evolution, educational implications* Wiley-Blackwell.

Rickford, J. R., Sweetland, J., & Rickford, A. E. (2004). African American English and other vernaculars in education. *Journal of English Linguistics, 32*(3), 230.

Rogers, I. (2009). Remembering the Black campus movement: An oral history interview with James P. Garrett. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 2(10), 30-41.

Rogers, I. (2012). The Black campus movement and the institutionalization of Black studies, 1965-1970. *Journal of African American Studies*, 16(1), 21-40. doi: 10.1007/s12111-011-9173-2

Royster, J.J. & Williams, J.C. (1999). History in the spaces left: African American presence and narratives of composition studies. *College Composition and Communication. 50(4).563-584.*

Shaughnessy, M. P. (1977). *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*. New York: Oxford UP.

Smedley, A. (1999). *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999.

Smitherman, G. (1977). *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Smitherman, G. (1981). *Black English and the Education of Black Children and Youth: Proceedings of the National Invitational Symposium on the King Decision*. Detroit, MI: Center for Black Studies, Wayne State University.

Smitherman, G. (1981). “What go round come round": King in perspective. *Harvard Educational Review, 51*(1), 40-56.

Smitherman, G. (2003). *Talkin that talk: Language, culture, and education in African America* Routledge.

Smitherman, G. (2004). Language and African Americans. *Journal of English Linguistics, 32*(3), 186.

Smitherman, G., & Villanueva, V. (2003). *Language diversity in the classroom: From intention to practice* Southern Illinois Univ Pr.

Souto-Manning, M. (2009). Acting out and talking back: Negotiating discourses in American early educational settings. *Early Child Development and Care, 179*(8), 1083-1094.

Speicher, B. L., & McMahon, S. M. (1992). Some African American perspectives on Black English vernacular. *Language in Society, 21*(03), 383-407.

Sommers, S., & Saltz, L. (2004). The novice as expert: Writing the freshman year. *Composition and Communication, 56*(1), 124-149.

Thelin, J. R. (2011). *A History of American Higher Education, 2nd ed.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Thompson, A. (2003). Tiffany, friend of people of color: White investments in anti- racism. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 16(*1), 7-29.

Urciuoli, B. (1996). *Exposing prejudice: Puerto Rican experiences of language, race, and class*. Boulder, CO

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Policy Planning and Research. (1965). *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor.

Williams-Farrier (2017). Signifying, Narrativing, and repetition: Radical Approaches to theorizing African American Language. Merdian's Feminism, Race and transnationalism (15)1 218-242

Williamson, J. A. (1999). In defense of themselves: The Black student struggle for success and recognition at predominantly White colleges and universities. *Journal of Negro Education*, 68(1), 92-105.

Williamson, J. (2003). Black power on campus: The University of Illinois, 1965-75. University of Illinois Press.

Wolfram, W., Adger C.T., & Christian, D. (1999). *Dialects in schools and communities*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.

Woolard, K. (1985).Language variation and cultural hegemony. *American Ethnologist* 12(4):.738-749.

Yosso, T. (2006). Whose culture has capital? : A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. . In A. D. Dixson, & C. K. Rousseau (Eds.), *Critical race theory in education: All god's children got a song* (pp. 167-189).